This Old House
APRIL 2007
get more curb appeal
7 EASY UPGRADES
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garden gates
wooden fences
+ 29 new yard products
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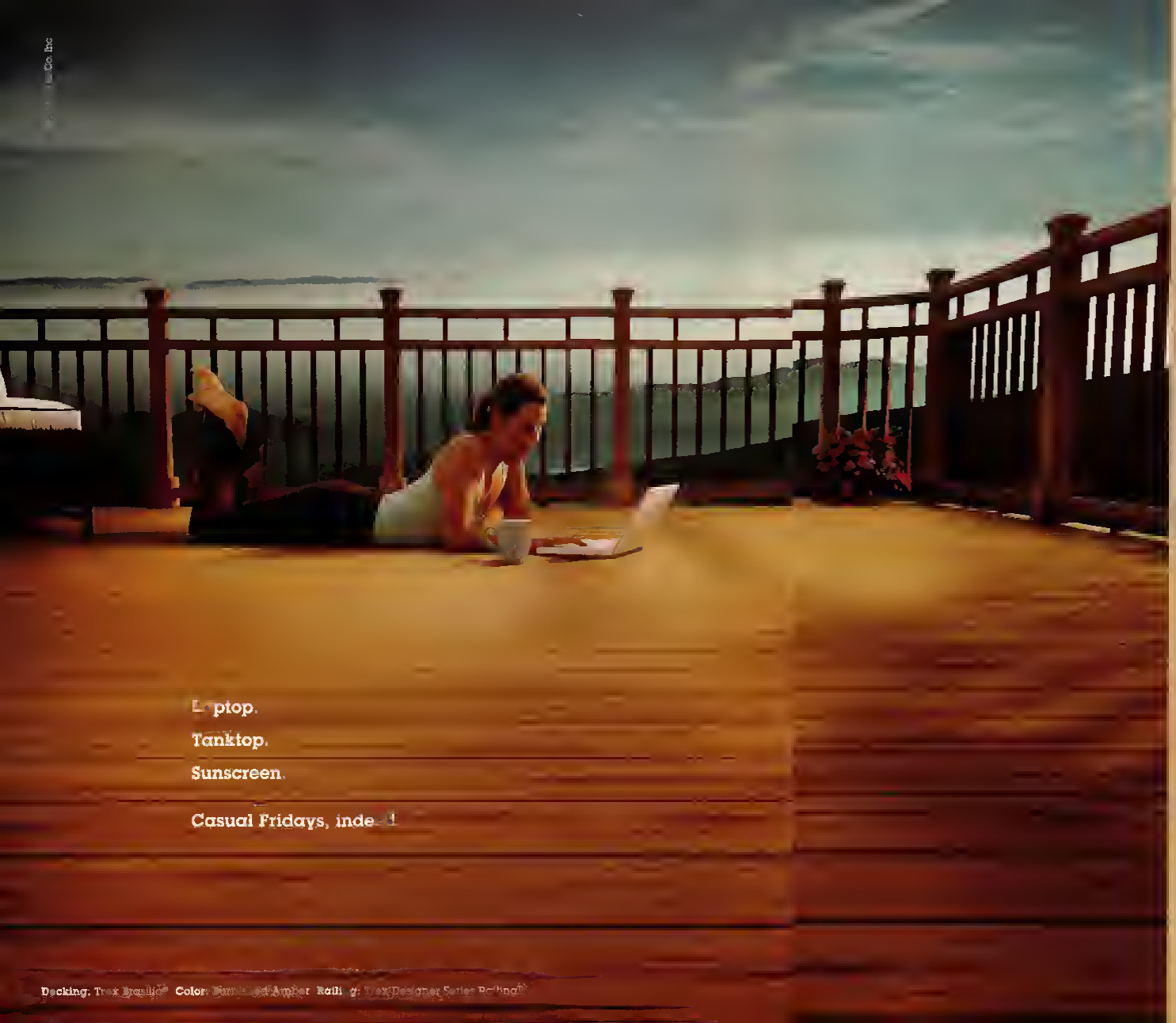

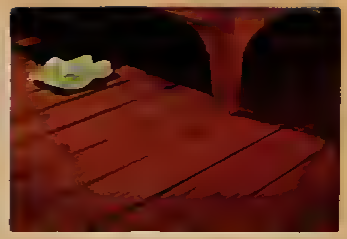

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As I See It, #11 in a photographic series by Sanjay Kothari

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Cover photograph by **Matthew Benson**

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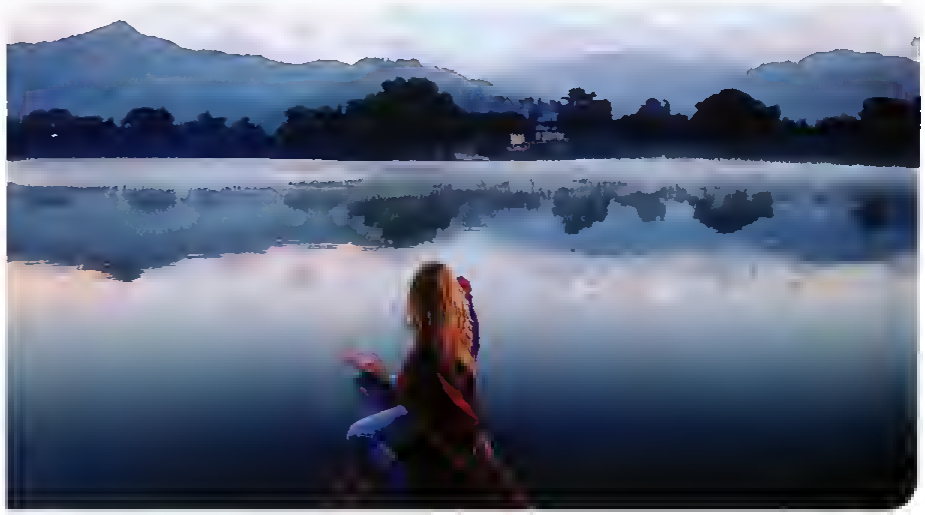
PHOTOS (CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT): CARL TREMBLAY; JURGEN FRANK; TAMPEN BRADY; BAY 8 PRINCE; ILLUSTRATION: ZEHAN LAZAR

Who knew all those double lattes would end up being so relaxing?



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HOW TO...

- Install a lamppost
- Hang a door
- Reface a cabinet
- Lay a cork floor
- Build a bookcase
- Plant a tree
- Seed a lawn

...AND MORE THAN 50 OTHER STEP-BY-STEP PROJECTS

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Trump the Joneses

Why just keep up with the neighbors when you can blow them away with curb appeal? Get your roof, siding, doors, windows, deck, gutters, garage, and exterior paint in shape

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Got Kids?

Dozens of ideas for making your home safe, comfortable, and fun for the little ones. Plus, photo galleries filled with the latest kid-friendly products and designs

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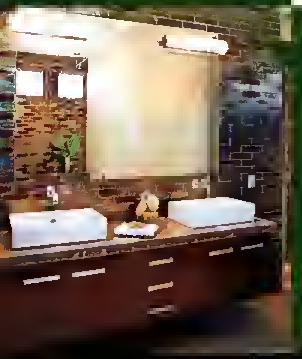

Bath Design Problems Solved

- They found a space for another bath—it was called the garage
- She wanted her own sink—so did he
- They went to a spa—inside their home.
- The space was small, but their ideas weren't.

Read their stories. See their photos. Learn from them.

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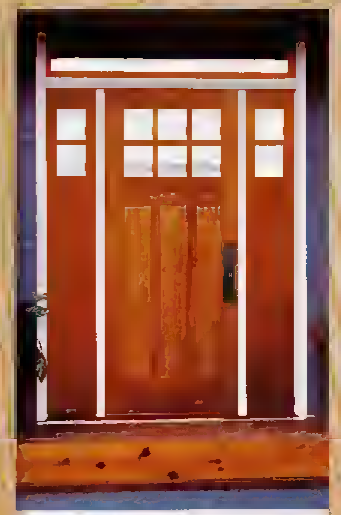
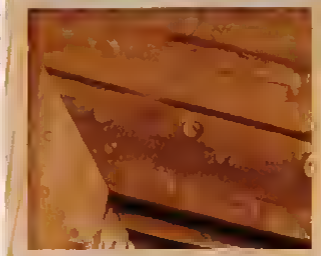


Exterior Premium Pine Door 1863AP

Throw everything you know about wood out the window.



Wood Radius Casement Window

Exterior Premium Pine Door 1871AP

Wood Double-Hung Window

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You Can't Judge a House by Its Color

"IT'S A GREAT PLACE WITH A LOT OF POTENTIAL—not for everyone, but I think you'll like it." My Realtor was saying this as we walked down the street to the last listing in his book. "It's a little artsy, a little offbeat," he said.

It was a day after I lost the fourth bid on the fourth house he'd shown me, so maybe I was a little desperate, and those words (artsy, offbeat—I knew they were code) didn't sound the alarm the way they should have. No other way to explain it.

I mean, I'm the most superficial guy I know. I've never not judged a book by its cover. I even judge *people* by their covers. Any children my wife may or may not one day have are only safe because they cannot be returned to sender. I'm just that shallow.

So desperation could be the only reason I wasn't put off by a house that my mother later described as "very, very unusual" before adding, "I guess it takes all kinds." Its 19th-century brick was painted purple. Its brownstone trim was painted pink. And its front steps were painted gray, except in the spots where someone had squiggled on green lines to mimic some kind of ivy. "Think that's poison ivy?" the Realtor asked, and laughed. Artsy and offbeat were kind—ugly was more accurate.

Still, I made an offer on the spot. It was late winter when I inked the contract, early spring when I took the keys. And in between, something miraculous happened. The backyard garden came to life, and as the months went by so did a parade of flowers: crocus and tulips in the spring, irises and daylilies in midsummer, hosta and lily turf late in the year. Birds and butterflies visited the little urban plot, and every moment spent out there that first season was one less that I didn't regret the biggest and most impulsive purchase of my life.

And that, really, brings us to the moral of our little story, dear reader. The moral is this: Even if the front of your house is ugly, when you're blessed with a beautiful backyard the front of your house is still just as ugly.

Hence my interest in this issue's "Curb Appeal" feature on page 96, which offers plenty of advice both to those interested in sprucing up for a sale or, like me, sprucing up to, if not keep up with the Joneses, at least keep them from laughing.

SCOTT OMELIANUK
EDITOR

P.S. Another must-read is "Small Yard, Big Impact," on page 68, which has lots of ideas for making the most of your outdoor space, from the aforementioned curb to the back fence.

PHOTO: ANTONIA REEVE

The editor on his stoop, in front of his once-purple brick house, where he preps cast-iron railing for a makeover.

The real-estate agent called it "artsy" and "offbeat." Ugly was more accurate. Still, I made an offer for it on the spot.

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mail

Green House

I appreciate the attention *TOH* gives to "green" building energy efficiency water conservation and other tips on how to make our homes more environmentally friendly [Green Resolutions" January/February] You are helping to prove that what is good for the environment is also good for our wallets the health of our families and our quality of life Keep it up!

AMY KOBER SEATTLE

Double Standard?

As a forester I strongly disagree with the use of the word "plundered" to describe a timber harvest [Steeped in Character" January/February] especially when you tout Brazilian cherry flooring just a few pages before [The Right Kitchen for You] Is it plundering to use a renewable resource to build our homes? Not when you consider the jobs created and economic benefits from the wise use of American forest products which are currently growing three times faster than they re being harvested Is it plundering to bypass this system to purchase floors from tropical rain forests? Absolutely!

BEN PETERS NEW YORK STATE DEPT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

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Lowering a Basement Floor

Your Basement Design article [January/February] was great We noticed that the owners had the floor dug out in order to gain headroom We've been discussing this very idea and were hoping you could advise us on the type of contractor who would perform this kind of work and on what we might need to be mindful of when considering this idea

CHRIS AND LINDSAY ORTH DOWNERS GROVE ILL

The editors reply This is a big job involving structural considerations that must be addressed by professionals A general contractor with lots of remodeling experience would be the person to consult first He/she would consult a structural engineer as needed It helps the process considerably if original plans for the house are available—that way the contractor would have an idea of foundation wall footing and drainage details

Towel Warmers

The article on towel warmers [Chill Chasers January/February] didn t mention that they can be used as primary heat sources, too Some of the units you showed when piped into a typical hydronic system can give out 2,000 Btu or the equivalent of 3½ feet of baseboard I remodeled a small bathroom in my home and had no room for baseboard radiators etc I sized the towel warmer using heat-loss calculations, then installed the unit on the ceiling and piped it into my hydronic system. It is the warmest room in the house and it looks good too.

TOM McALVIN LINDENHURST NY

Photo: Erik Kvalsvik

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around the HOUSE

Green Roofing Just Got Easier

A kit lets you grow your own

NOT THAT YOU CAN'T FIND the engineer, roofer, nurseryman, and architect to professionally install a green roof. We even told you how (May 2005, "Up on Roofs?") But everyone loves an option that cuts out extra labor, materials, and middlemen. That's why the eco-obsessed editors here at *This Old House* had to see GreenGrid, a DIY green-roofing kit. Its freestanding modules ostensibly give the same benefits as green roofs the experts install—if your roof's already sound, fairly flat, and watertight. Don't bet on the same polish as with a pro team. But you may see the usual improved cooling and heating and reduced rainwater runoff. (We'll see how our kit fares.)

Developer Weston Solutions, an environmental consultancy, installed pro versions of the modules for years before scaling them down into a system that average joes can use. "Water them for a year. Little additional maintenance is needed," says market development associate Jim Lindell. However, no arid climes, tar roofs, or slopes sharper than 15 percent. $10–$15 a square foot, greengridroofs.com. —STEPHEN MILIOTI

PLANTING MODULES
Plants take root in 2 by 2 plastic containers instead of layers of materials laid directly on the roof, so extra waterproofing and drainage measures are unnecessary. The waffled trough directs excess water into its gutters, a sort of reservoir for plants. Wet, a square foot weighs 15 to 18 pounds. An engineer must OK the load.
SOIL
The job of spreading growing medium over a roof's surface is eliminated by premeasured packs. Each fills a module.
PLANTS
Sedums come in flats of mixed combinations. This one blooms red in autumn and yellow from mid- through
ROOT AND SOIL BARRIER
A woven fleece plant liner for each tray acts as both a filter, holding wet soil in place, and a physical barrier to unwanted root growth—functions that are addressed with separate components.

THE EASY PIECES.

SPEAKING OF ORGANIC ROOFS...

WHY DON'T THEY CALL IT GREENLAND?
A turf roof has sheltered Iceland's ancient Vidimyri church for 173 years.

DOWN MEXICO WAY
In Mexico, a palapero is an expert in the thatched palm roofing seen everywhere and believed to be a 2,000-year old local practice.

A BRITISH RULE
The UK preservation group English Heritage reports that traditional thatched straw roofs still cover 30,000 buildings across England, 24,000 are on its historic registry

FIVE SOLUTIONS UNDER $5

Keep wishing for that killer tool collection. But as our pros from *This Old House* TV confess, sometimes all you need for quickie home repairs lies within reach—and well under budget. Look what they can fix for a fin. —ALEXANDRA BANDON

COMPASS
PROBLEM: You're scribing a piece of trim to snugly fit an uneven surface.
SOLUTION from master carpenter Norm Abram: The compass in your kid's pencil box works as well as fancy woodworking scribes. Just be careful and don't let it slip open as you trace the cut line. $1.20

TWINE
PROBLEM: You need to cut a PVC pipe to add a vent, but it's wedged where there's no room for a hacksaw.
SOLUTION from plumbing and heating expert Richard Trethewey: Thread a length of sturdy cotton twine around the pipe and "saw" it back and forth until the friction melts right through. (Avoid synthetic twine, though, since it will melt, too.) $3.49

VELCRO
PROBLEM: The roses are drooping, and you're out of those handy garbage-bag twist ties.
SOLUTION from landscape contractor Roger Cook: Velcro. It's a gentle, reusable plant tie. $4.70

ELASTIC
PROBLEM: You've got to divide a long workpiece into even segments.
SOLUTION from general contractor Tom Silva: Sewing elastic makes a good expandable ruler for marking off lengthy spacing. Line it up, unstretched, against a tape measure and mark it at even, whole-numbered intervals. Stretched out again, end to end with the workpiece, those marks can be transferred. The spacing will be even. $1.49

SOCK
PROBLEM: While prepping a door to receive a smooth varnish, you run out of tack cloths.
SOLUTION from host Kevin O'Connor: A clean cotton gym sock lightly dampened with paint thinner works well enough. Plus, it's free. (Who hasn't got a few orphaned socks lying around?)

FOR DESTINATIONS

LAMBERTVILLE, NEW JERSEY

From a grim past, Lambertville, New Jersey, has emerged looking remarkably like it did in the 1800s—fairly bursting with about 1,900 Federal-style townhouses, Second Empire mansions, and gingerbread-trimmed Folk Victorians. (Half are on the National Register.) All of them brim with activity around this time as the idyllic Delaware River town prepares for Shad Fest, a celebration of the American shad that have spawned there for years. The fish were a fixture of town life for decades before industrialization brought in both new businesses and industrial waste that ruined the river for them. A 1970s cleanup brought back the shad; a 1980s influx of artists and empty nesters helped rescue the Victorian-era homes and storefronts. Where else can you get house tours, boat rides, entrepreneurs, and omega-3 fatty acids, all in one sojourn? For more information, visit Lambertville.org. —KEITH PANDOLFI

ABOVE: This 1873 Folk Victorian, which now houses a French bistro, has barge-board detailing at its eaves. **INSET:** Shad Fest has been held annually since 1981.

PHOTOS (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP): BOB MORRIS; COURTESY OF THE LAMBERTVILLE-NEW HOPE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE; HEINZEROTH MARKETING GROUP; JEFF HARRIS PHOTOGRAPHY (3)

{ ORIGINS: QUIZ }

Q City of Brotherly Love is taken. But Chicago could adopt the nickname City of Brotherly Innovation in honor of brothers Carl and Edgar Anstett who made the first mallet-driven nailer there. What year did they nail down the patent?

A A. 1947 B. 1899 C. 1951 D. 1872

(Turn to "Origins: Answer," page 20, for the answer.)

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ONE-MAN LAWN ARMY

UNIVERSAL ATTACHMENTS BRING OUT THE RAMBO IN OLD TRIMMERS

Battling a huge backyard is often a question of firepower. A secret weapon of many pro landscapers is the split-shaft string trimmer—basically a weed whacker that divides into two pieces to accept attachments, quickly converting into a power edger, tiller, blower, or pruner. Those attachments have always been brand-specific, though, meaning weekend warriors with anything less than a pro-grade tool have been forced to edge the driveway with trimmers turned upside down, hoping for the best and getting ragged results. A new line of universal attachments called Expand-It has come to the rescue. Compatible with a wide range of split-shaft trimmer brands (including, probably, the one sitting in your garage), Expand-It converts your tool into a proper edger, tiller, hedge trimmer, blower, or pruner. Because the attachments will likely work with your existing power head (the engine, and also the most expensive piece), you can stockpile your lawn arsenal on the cheap. Assemble the attachments tool-free by sticking them on the shaft and tightening a knob. Guaranteed to mow down the toughest dandelions that stand in your way.

—HARRY SAWYERS

{ TOH TIP }

Protect Small Blooms as You Prune

When you're armed to the teeth with multitools, you may as well prune too. Just remember to shield low plants from falling branches and big feet. Before he snips, *This Old House* landscape contractor Roger Cook makes hard hats for his flowers from plastic pots or buckets. Deep, wide mouths keep them from breaking leaves.

PHOTO: (TOP) MAREN BRAUN

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IT'S NOT JUST FOR BUNGALOWS

Mission-style accents are multiplying like it's 1899. OK, purists may not adore the solar torch influenced by Frenk Lloyd Wright. But there's charm and practicality in the expanding choices. Repro tile is perfect for a Craftsman, and a builder-grade kitchen can likely use the added warmth of a hammered-copper sink. Consider what's cool of the copies and the brand-new:

1> Kitchen sink, $950, coppersinksdirect.com. 2> Coffee-table wares: *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (Phaidon Press, $70) and *The New Bungalow Kitchen* (Taunton Press, $30). 3> Solar pathlight, set of four, $40, brinkmann.net. 4> Handle with plate, and knob, $27 and $14, woodcreft.com. 5> Copper tile, set of 3, $110, copperheadsinks.com. 6> Pineconas tile, $19, wingeddogtile.com. 7> Pine landscape and rose tiles, $132 and $32, missiontilewest.com.

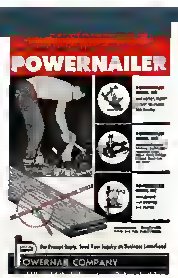
10 USES

Garden Hose

Time to wrestle those 75 feet of stiff hose out of hibernation again. Not fun. If it's not as lithe as it use to be, why not recycle? Assign an old hose some of these new tasks. – MARK FEIRER

Use it to.

7. **Buffer bark.** *TOH* landscape contractor Roger Cook slips hose scraps over wire he uses to stabilize young trees. No chafing.
2. **Catch earwigs.** They hide where it's cramped and dark during the day, so University of California master gardener Sue McDavid leaves 6-inch hose segments lying around her garden—makeshift traps she shakes free of earwigs later, drowning them in soapy water.
3. **Gird the garage.** Until junior drivers master backing in, screwing lengths of hose at car-bumper level to corners of the garage door frame beats repairing dented trim.
4. **Simulate a soaker.** Crimp the open end and drill a few holes.
5. **Level off.** Avid DIYer and host of TV's *Garden Sense* Walter Reeves converted his into a giant water level to establish an even grade for his patio. He attached 3-foot segments of clear vinyl tubing to each end and filled it with colored water to make the level easy to read. Genius.
6. **Belt tools.** Screwing opposite ends of a 2-foot halved segment to a wall, *This Old House* general contractor Tom Silva makes a sort of tool hanger that hugs the handles.
7. **Sheathe blades.** Tom Silva also slit a length to cover the teeth of his handsaw.
8. **Grip buckets.** A piece slipped over a wire handle provides a better grip.
9. **Swing safely.** Encase swing-set chains in hose segments to protect tiny fingers.
10. **Extend a faucet.** *TOH* contributor Jeanne Huber linked hoses to relocate an outdoor spigot to a convenient location. She buried the extension 4 inches deep.



{ ORIGINS: ANSWER }

Q **A.** 1947 The Anstetts had set up the Powernail Company one year before that. They first made the nailer to piece together window sashes. It exceeded that purpose to also drive collated nails into hardwood flooring.

PHOTOS: (TOP LEFT AND BOTTOM RIGHT) JEFF HARRIS PHOTOGRAPHY; (BOTTOM LEFT) COURTESY OF POWERNAIL COMPANY

There's relief for pain like this. Ask your doctor about LYRICA®

Do you feel stabbing pain in your feet? Or tingling, numbness, burning or shooting sensations?

If so, you may have painful neuropathy, also known as nerve pain. This type of pain is different from musculoskeletal (muscle or joint) pain, and may need a different type of treatment. Only LYRICA is FDA-approved to treat two of the most common types of nerve pain, Diabetic Nerve Pain and Pain after Shingles. LYRICA is specially designed to provide the relief you need. It works on the nerves that cause this pain. So you can start to think about other things besides your pain. Ask your doctor if LYRICA can help. LYRICA is one of several treatments for you and your doctor to consider.

Prescription LYRICA is not for everyone. Some of the most common side effects of LYRICA are dizziness and sleepiness. Others are dry mouth, swelling of hands and feet, blurry vision, weight gain, and trouble concentrating. You may have a higher chance of swelling or gaining weight if you are also taking certain diabetes medicines. And, if you drink alcohol or take medicines that make you sleepy, you may feel more sleepy when you start LYRICA. You should not drive a car or work with machines until you know how LYRICA affects you. Tell your doctor about any changes in your eyesight, muscle pain along with a fever or tired feeling, or skin sores due to diabetes. Also tell your doctor if you are planning to father a child. If you have had a drug or alcohol problem, you may be more likely to misuse LYRICA. You should talk with your doctor before you stop taking LYRICA or any other prescription medication. *Please see important product information on adjacent page.*

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IMPORTANT FACTS

LYRICA® PREGABALIN C-IV capsules (LEER-i-kah)

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION ABOUT LYRICA

LYRICA may make you feel dizzy or sleepy

- Do not drive a car, work with machines, or do other dangerous things until you are sure you will be alert. Ask your doctor when it is okay to do these things.

LYRICA may cause problems with your eyesight, including blurry vision. Call your doctor if you have any changes in your eyesight.

ABOUT LYRICA

LYRICA is a prescription medicine used to treat:

- Nerve pain from diabetes
- Nerve pain that continues after the rash from shingles heals

This pain can be sharp or burning. It can feel like tingling, shooting, or numbness. Some people taking LYRICA had less pain by the end of the first week. LYRICA may not work for everyone.

WHO IS LYRICA FOR?

Who can take LYRICA:

- Adults 18 years or older with nerve pain from diabetes or after shingles

Who should NOT take LYRICA:

- Anyone who is allergic to anything in LYRICA

LYRICA has not been studied for nerve pain in children under 18 years of age.

BEFORE STARTING LYRICA

Tell your doctor about all your medical conditions.
Tell your doctor if you:

- Have or had kidney problems or dialysis
- Have heart problems, including heart failure
- Have a bleeding problem or a low blood platelet count
- Have abused drugs or alcohol. LYRICA may cause some people to feel "high."
- Are either a man or woman planning to have children or a woman who is breast-feeding, pregnant, or may become pregnant. It is not known if LYRICA may decrease male fertility, cause birth defects, or pass into breast milk.

Tell your doctor about all your medicines. Include over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal products. Tell your doctor if you take:

- Rosiglitazone (Avandia®)* or pioglitazone (Actos®)** for diabetes
- Narcotic pain medicines such as oxycodone, tranquilizers, or medicines for anxiety such as lorazepam
- Any medicines that make you sleepy

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF LYRICA

LYRICA may cause serious side effects, including:

- Dizziness and sleepiness
- Eyesight problems
- Weight gain and swelling of hands and feet. Weight gain may affect control of diabetes. Weight gain and swelling can be serious for people with heart problems.
- Unexplained muscle pain, soreness, or weakness along with a fever or tired feeling. If you have these symptoms, tell your doctor right away.
- Skin sores. In LYRICA studies, skin sores were seen in animals but not in humans. If you have diabetes, pay extra attention to your skin. Tell your doctor about any skin problems.

The most common side effects of LYRICA are:

- Dizziness
- Sleepiness
- Swelling of hands and feet
- Blurry vision
- Weight gain
- Trouble concentrating
- Dry mouth

You may have a higher chance of swelling or gaining weight if you are taking certain diabetes medicines with LYRICA. Medicines that already make you sleepy or dizzy may make you feel more sleepy or dizzy with LYRICA.

HOW TO TAKE LYRICA

Do:

- Take LYRICA exactly as your doctor tells you. Your doctor may tell you to take it 2 or 3 times a day.
- Take LYRICA with or without food.

Don't:

- Do not drive a car or use machines if you feel sleepy while taking LYRICA.
- Do not drink alcohol or use other medicines that make you sleepy while taking LYRICA.
- Do not change the dose or stop LYRICA suddenly. You may have headaches, nausea, diarrhea, or trouble sleeping if you stop taking LYRICA suddenly.
- Do not start any new medicines without first talking to your doctor.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist. This is only a brief summary of important information.
- Go to **www.lyrica.com** or call **1-888-9-LYRICA (1-888-959-7422).**

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PROBLEM: **Five people at home...and one-and-a-half baths**

SOLUTION: **Turn a seldom-used upstairs office off the master bedroom into a roomy new master bath. Here's how**

STYLING COLETTE SCANLON OF 12

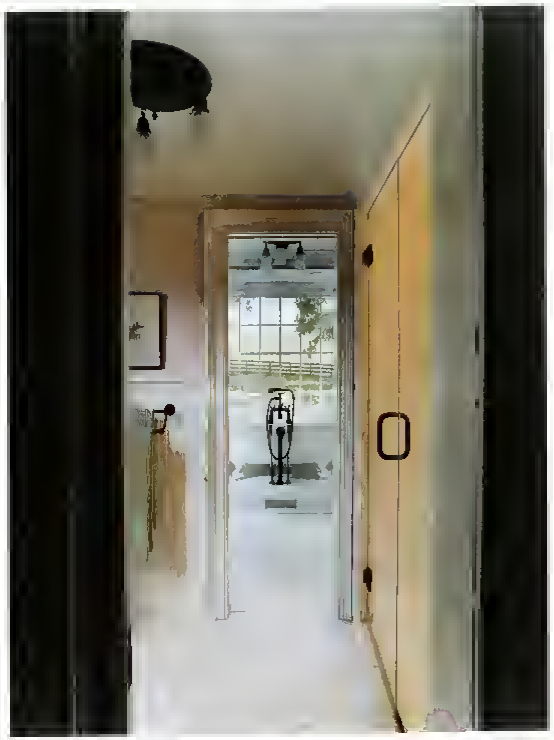
CHOP UP A NARROW SPACE to make it feel bigger? It may sound counterintuitive, but that's just what made this new North Salem, New York, master bath seem more spacious.

When Katherine Daniels and Josh Leicht bought their 1860s farmhouse in the country, the first floor powder room and second-floor full bath sufficed for the married couple. Then sons Jake, now 7, and Ben, 5, came along, followed by a live-in babysitter, and their little home gradually went from cozy to cramped. So they hired designers Liz and Rick O'Leary and carpenter Chris Davidson to turn a seldom-used office adjacent to the master bedroom into a bath with views of their yard—and an adjoining horse farm. It was the O'Learys who suggested separating the rectangular space into two rooms: one for the his-and-her sinks and claw foot soaking tub, the other for the shower and toilet. "In my mind, I had it all set up in the one room," says Katherine, "but this is so much better—it really does feel like a big, luxurious space."

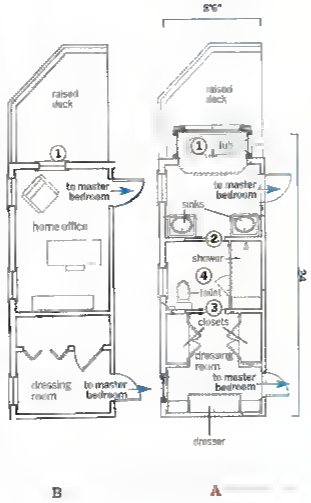
To open it up even more, an adjacent dressing closet was reworked with a doorway into the bath, creating an uninterrupted sight line from the closet's dresser at one end to the raised tub at the other to the bucolic scene out the new window bay. Two entrances from the bedroom create a circular flow, white woodwork and warm beige walls, plus plenty of windows—six in all—give the compact rooms an airy, open feeling. Says O'Leary, "You always have something to look at, so you never feel like you're at a dead end."

BY **NATALIE RODRIGUEZ**
PHOTOGRAPHS BY **JÜRGEN FRANK**

BEFORE. This second-floor home office in the rear of the house didn't get much use. **AFTER.** The new tub alcove was bumped out onto an existing wooden deck; it sits on a raised platform that conceals plumbing and wiring and protects them from the elements.



BEFORE The original 8½-by-21 foot space housed a home office and a dressing room. **AFTER.** Reconfiguring the dressing room closet with more efficient storage allowed for a second entrance into the master bath. His-and-her sink stations and a glass-enclosed shower are in separate rooms in the renovated bath, with a 5-foot soaking tub in the new 3-by-7-foot bumpout.



The Plan

Divvy up a long rectangular space into distinct grooming areas separated by pocket doors.

What They Did

1 | ADDED THE TUB ALCOVE AND WINDOWS. Expanding 3 feet onto the upper deck required creating an elevated stage and widening a soffit in the kitchen ceiling below to run plumbing. Lining the alcove with additional and bigger windows gave the homeowners a place to enjoy a leisurely soak with a view to the outdoors.

2 | COMPARTMENTALIZED THE BATH. Separate chambers to hold the shower and tub with separate entrances adds to the feeling of a luxurious spalike space.

3 | REWORKED THE DRESSING ROOM. To make the bath seem larger, the existing dressing area was redesigned to open into the shower room as well as the bedroom.

4 | STREAMLINED THE VIEW. With the pocket doors open, the homeowners can see from one end of the dressing room straight through the window over the tub. The glass shower enclosure and over-the-sink mirrors also allow for vistas of the property.

"Even though it's a long, narrow space and we broke it up into a series of smaller rooms, all the window views and doorways make it seem larger and more open."

— RICK O'LEARY, DESIGNER

FLOOR PLANS: ANMOPOLE

1

The Details

Vintage-look fixtures and fittings echo the style of the 1860s farmhouse

1 | AN OLD-FASHIONED PEDESTAL SINK from Toto, a wall-mounted wood medicine chest from Pottery Barn, and a glass-shaded wall sconce from Restoration Hardware help the bath look like it's always been there. Custom radiator covers hide the new baseboard heat, and wide-plank pine floors are painted white to match those in the master bedroom.

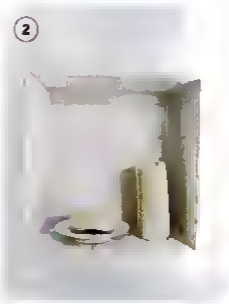
2 | CLEAN WHITE SUBWAY TILE covers the shower walls, including the niche for toiletries and a built-in bench along the back wall.

3 | NEW WAINSCOTING AND BASEBOARDS echo the handmade paneling and molding in the home's other bathroom, which is original to the house.

4 | A LIGHT COLOR SCHEME—from the Benjamin Moore North Hampton Beige paint on the walls to the white-hued wainscoting, floorboards, tile, tub, and sinks—helps make the room feel bright and airy.

5 | THE OIL-RUBBED FINISH on the Newport Brass tub filler, sink faucet, shower-door hardware, and towel rods has a rustic look. It also provides a welcome visual contrast to the white tub and the other soft tones in the room.

BUILD YOUR SKILL. Love the look of beadboard in the bath? Learn how to install and finish it right. **Workshop,** p. 103



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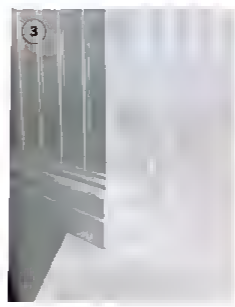


3

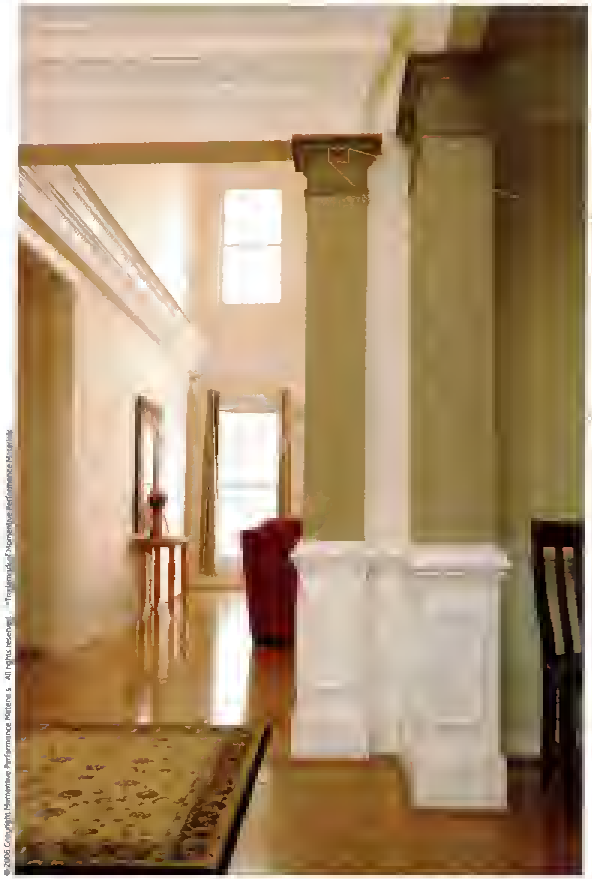
4

5

For more tips on making a small bath feel bigger, thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY, PAGE 112

The right sealant won't outshine your paint job.



Shiners appear on trim caulked with competitor s sealant

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Nothing is worse than having imperfections overshadow the beauty of a fresh paint job. The #1 problem reported by professional painters are "shiners"—changes in the sheen of paint when applied over caulk or sealant. GE Infinity* multi-purpose sealant provides a consistent painted finish with no "shiners." When you want a paintable sealant that adds to the beauty, GE Infinity is the right choice

imagination at work

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Leave the Light On

Creative pathway lighting boosts your home's security and its curb appeal

BY NATALIE RODRIGUEZ PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID PRINCE

SINCE THE DAYS WHEN 18th-century blacksmiths welded lanterns onto fence railings, outdoor lighting has become an art. Its tools, inspired by the world of theater, include uplights, spots, halo-throwing globes, and even solar-powered torches. Whether lining the edges of pathways, illuminating steps, or brightening entries, landscape fixtures add security as they impart style. Some, like the multicolored glass orbs, graceful bronze pillars, and slender copper lanterns on these pages, lend drama to a garden even when they're turned off. Trust us—with footlights like these to set the stage, any house can have star quality.

1 | FLIGHT OF FANCY
A favorite with *This Old House* staff for its whimsical antique look this cast-brass branch and canary with a bronze finish should attract neighborly admirers, too. 23 inches high, $297; hinkleylighting.com

2 | GLOW POST
Pillars, like this Asian-inspired bollard are the perfect height to set amid shrubs or flowerbeds. 26 inches high by 7 inches wide, $273, kichler.com

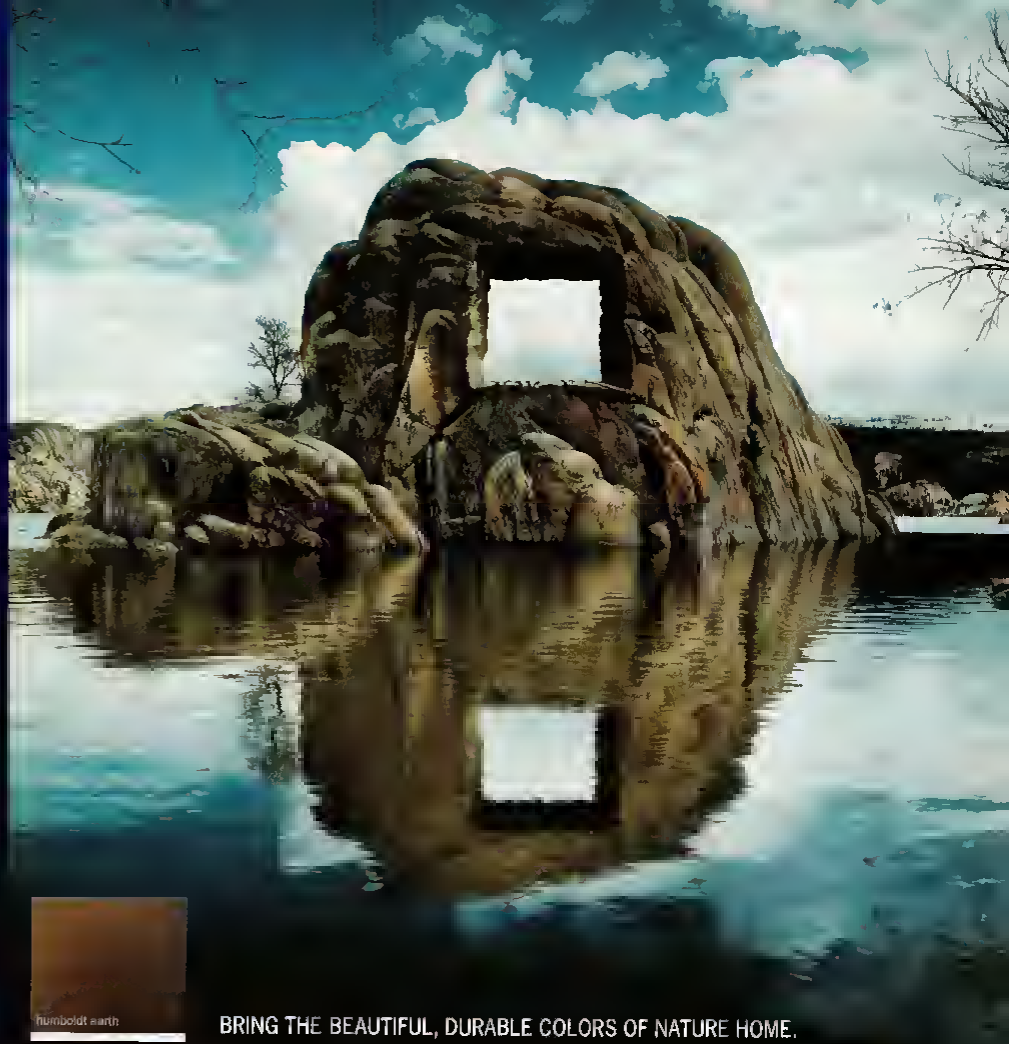
3 | ROCK SOLID
This hollowed-out stone blends in with the landscape like a chameleon during the day but glows serenely at night. About 14 inches high by 15 inches wide, 100 pounds, $179 stoneforest.com

A common mistake in landscape lighting is using too few fixtures, resulting in a shadowy, haunted-house look.

4 | BROAD BEAM
Economize with this tall copper area light, since a few will cover a lot of ground. The angled stem and broad shade cast light as far as 16 feet away. 27 inches high with a 9-inch diameter shade. $164, nightscaping.com

5 | SOLAR FLAIR
This solar-powered steel torch with a copper finish spreads its beam 360 degrees, good for simultaneously brightening a walkway and a flower bed. 14¼ inches high with a 6¾-inch diameter shade, $50 for six; brinkmann.net

6 | MOVING TARGETS
Spotlights resembling the big ones on movie sets add visual interest as well as functionality. An adjustable elbow on the base lets you illuminate steps, driveways, trees or architectural features. Square: 6½ inches wide by 4 inches high. $237; cylindrical: 7 inches, $177; hinkleylighting.com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Installing Your Own

Setting up low-voltage pathway lighting is a doable job for the capable DIYer. Just plan carefully, and keep these tips in mind.

> You'll need to wire the lights to a transformer, which steps down household power into useable 12-volt current. One transformer can handle 300 watts of fixtures; if you have more, you'll need additional transformers.

> Ideally, lights should be spaced 6 to 10 feet apart, with at least 10 feet of cable between the first light and the transformer to ensure proper voltage drop.

> Cables must be buried at least 6 inches deep for protection from weather and wayward lawn tools.

> Halogen bulbs are the closest to daylight, but LED bulbs are the most energy efficient, lasting up to 20 times longer.

> Replace burned-out bulbs immediately. Extra voltage running through the system might cause other bulbs to blow out as well.

For a lighting installation step-by-step, thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts

7 | GOLDEN GLOBES
Subtlety not your style? These 20-watt, blown-glass orbs make a bold statement, day or night. The wired stems adjust up to 36 inches, so they can sit close to the ground like extraterrestrial eggs or appear to hover beside a pathway or pond. Sphere and egg, both 8 inches in diameter: $395 and $420; nightorbs.com

8 | STEM GEMS
Individually, these dainty solar wands aren't bright enough to light a walkway. But planted together in a row of them can guide you in the dark. Best of all, they need no wiring. Just stick them in the ground and enjoy the view. Fully charged, the LED bulbs glow for 6 to 8 hours. Green sphere, 35 inches high, $45; red ball and yellow flower, adjustable from 42 to 60 inches high, $40 to $45; allsopgarden.com

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY, PAGE 122

IT'S A COLD, HARSH WORLD OUT THERE.

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New Turns for Old Newels

>> How to use the vintage wooden posts to support a new staircase, prop up a counter, or dress up an entryway

BY AMY R. HUGHES PHOTOGRAPHS BY KRISTINE LARSEN

PERHAPS THE MOST intriguing newel post ever salvaged came not from a crumbling estate but rather from a wrecked "floating palace," the RMS *Titanic*.

Carved from English white oak and bearing a fruit, vegetable, and floral motif, the newel was part of the ship's Grand Staircase. It was among the debris fished from the North Atlantic during the recovery effort just days after *Titanic* sank on April 15, 1912.

The relic—actually just two of its face panels survived—is now on display at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Halifax, Nova Scotia. But if you want to possess your own piece of history, architectural salvage shops stock dozens of old newels—some with carvings as fine as those on the *Titanic* artifact.

Positioned at the end of a flight of stairs, a newel post's primary purpose was to support the balustrade. One of the first architectural features a visitor would see in an entry foyer or central hallway, newels also had a decorative function and were often designed to impress with columnlike shafts, plinth-block bases, and finial tops.

Because of their structural importance, newels were typically made from hardwoods such as walnut and oak. And unlike stair spindles, which tended to be turned from lesser, paint-grade woods, the majority of the posts and the handrails they anchored were clear-coated with varnish or shellac to show off their grain patterns and fine craftsmanship. "Unpainted wood was also easier to keep up, with hands running along it all the time," says Mark Foster, who runs Second Chance, a nonprofit salvage dealer and deconstruction outfit in Baltimore. "We all look for low-maintenance materials today, but the idea wasn't lost on people a hundred years ago."

Some of the simplest wood newel posts have smooth square tops, while more decorative ones are capped with turned or carved finials.

The most ornate newels, which can be more than a foot thick at the base and up to 6 feet tall, date to the Victorian period, from about 1860 to 1890. These were typically turned on a mechanical lathe, producing elegant beaded shafts that were then embossed or built up with applied carved panels. Finials took the shape of acorns, urns, even figural busts of exotic animals. By 1910, pattern books and manufacturers' catalogs displayed simpler newel post designs in keeping with the emerging American Arts and Crafts movement. The staircase in a Mission- or Craftsman-style bungalow of the era, for instance, would have had a boxy, clean-lined newel, perhaps with applied wooden detailing to mimic the look of exposed joinery.

Today, newels of various styles and ages, including ones from Colonial Revival houses built as late as the 1950s, cost between $100 and $1,500, depending on wood type, size, decoration, and condition. Most of the newel posts that Foster and his crew at Second Chance rescue from demolished or remodeled row houses will be used on a staircase in a new house. Because the majority of old newels have plinth-block bases that stand flush with the floor or stair landing, they are easy to retrofit. Less common are ones with notched bases that followed the rise of a step. To use one of these newels at the end of a new balustrade, you may have to level the base and then elevate the shaft on a new wooden block to bring the height up to modern building codes.

The creative reuse projects for newels are seemingly limitless, as they are just souped-up posts. Apply a weather-resistant finish, and plant one at the end of your driveway to serve as support for a mailbox or as a signpost on which to nail your house numbers or hang a shingle. A matched set of salvaged newels can be attached to either side of an old door to make a one-of-a-kind headboard. You could also use a pair to prop up a countertop that extends beyond base cabinetry on a kitchen island or peninsula to create a bar-seating and food-service area. A single newel that's been sliced down the center can function as a pair of pilasters to flank either side of a passageway (see how below), or as decorative stanchions secured to the wall to break up a long run of wainscoting.

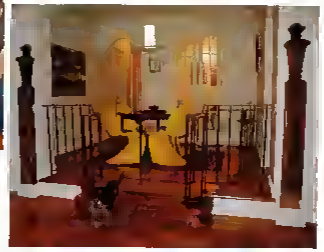
The elegant turnings and carvings of vintage newels impart a classic, timeless look to any interior, but it's their sturdy construction that's the real testament to their enduring use today. "I call them 'strong bones' because they were built to last forever," says Foster. "And once they're reinstalled, it's likely they will." ■

The clean lines [illegible] make them a [illegible] in a vintage Cra[illegible] or in a new Colon[illegible]

ONLINE BONUS

See *how cast-iron newels can anchor your outdoor staircase:* thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts

TIP **If you decide to refinish an old newel post to place at the end of a staircase,** use clear varnish or dark paint, which won't show wear and handprints the way light-colored paint will.



PHOTOS (BOTTOM) CHERISH PAVITS (2)

Turn a Newel Post Into Pilasters

I lugged home these heavy halves of a Victorian-era newel from a flea market. It was an excruciating six-block walk, but worth it considering how fab they look perched on plinths flanking the passage between my living and dining rooms. Here's how to re-create the look at your house. (Note: My newel was already split in two, but you'll likely have to rip one yourself.) **1.** To make plinth blocks, build an open-topped wooden box out of 1x material around which to wrap molding that matches your baseboard. The box should measure 1 inch wider and ½ inch deeper than the newel's base, and be slightly shorter than the baseboard. **2.** Place the box against the wall, and screw its bottom face to the floor. **3.** Nail the molding around the three sides of the box. (For a finished look, miter the corners, and cope the edges against the existing baseboard.) **4.** Top the box with a block that's recessed within the molding walls (see photo far left); paint the plinth. **5.** Position the newel on the plinth and secure it to the wall from behind using picture-hanging hardware. (Be sure to screw into a stud or use an anchor.)

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE DIRECTORY PAGE 112

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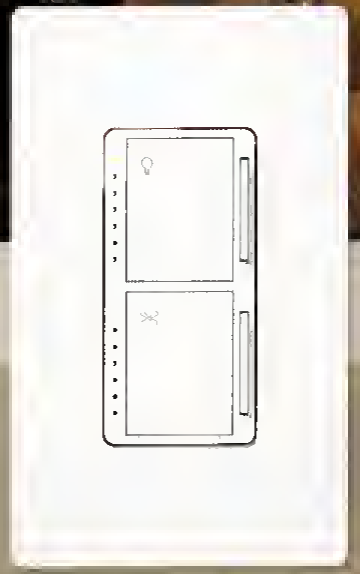

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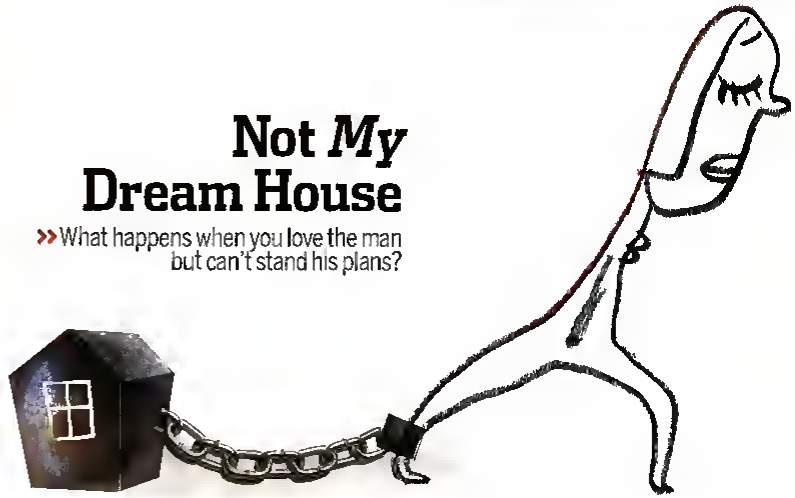
Not *My* Dream House

>> What happens when you love the man but can't stand his plans?



BY **WENDY PARIS**
ILLUSTRATIONS BY **SERGE BLOCH**

IT WAS NOT MY IDEA TO BUILD a country house. But my husband, David, had his own dreams. Misguided dreams. A Manhattan apartment dweller who hadn't handled a hammer in years, he believed that building a glass-and-cedar home in a remote corner of the Catskill Mountains would be easy. Rewarding. Mentally stimulating. The way I saw it, if we had to have a house, why couldn't it be one already built? Within walking distance of a charming town in, say, the Bahamas? But no. He wanted to build on a windswept mountaintop surrounded by 30,000 acres of untamed forest.

It's not that I'm against nature. I like nature. Especially manicured lawns surrounding stone fountains. But our plot had rocks and rattlesnakes and the howl of coyotes. It was 35 minutes from the nearest coffee shop, and being that far from cappuccino puts me on edge. New York City is beyond my comfort zone, climatically speaking, and this piece of land was two hours north and 2,000 feet up.

Besides, what did I know about houses? I was a renter. As a renter, repairs are not your responsibility. Whenever I needed a hook hung in my apartment, I called Vinnie at the hardware store and hired him to do it. I didn't own a power drill or wrench or nails. When I met him, David didn't even have cuticle scissors he could call his own. Now we'd set off on a vision quest to exploit our incompetence in the most expensive, time-consuming venture we'd ever tried.

We broke ground in November, the excavation team dynamiting through the area's notoriously rocky land. Our lack of experience immediately proved costly. The architect's foundation plan called for enough concrete and steel rebar to support a house in the middle of a swamp. Or so our contractor told us—after he'd laid it. "By the way, it cost five thousand dollars more than your foundation allotment."

Why hadn't he told us this earlier? Why hadn't we asked? Because we didn't know what we were doing.

The electrician's bill came in $2,000 above the estimate; he'd given his bid based on an assumption that we'd want a single ceiling-mounted fixture in every room, this for a home with 17-foot vaulted ceilings and an architect's restriction against canister lights.

As construction dragged on through the winter, I found the sheer number of choices overwhelming. We had to locate electrical outlets and switches, design bathrooms, buy vanities and mirrors, choose tile and tubs. Did we want radiant heat or forced-air? Solid wood flooring or engineered? I'd stand inside the freezing shell of a house, wearing boots and a sweater, down vest and down coat, snapping our decisions until the

When you see your house going up in the remote section of an unfashionable destination in a climatically unsuitable locale, you realize that you and your husband have different visions of domestic bliss.

cold drove me to the car, where I'd crank up the heat and watch my life tick away on the digital clock, trying not to cry.

David wanted a place to be closer to nature, an escape from the consumerism and materialism of the city. Now we spent our "country" weekends in strip malls. We logged 14 hours at Home Depot one weekend, the same at Lowe's the next. It was like being on a reality show: *Extreme Shopping*. After we made a fifth faucet exchange, an employee threatened to terminate our return-without-receipt privileges. Was this the kind of learning experience David craved?

On Memorial Day, we still lacked plumbing, drywall, and heat. "It's June," I said to David the following weekend. "I am not supposed to be wearing a down vest."

"I think you have a psychological problem in relation to the weather," David said.

Was this a supportive statement? From someone who'd foisted his dream on me? That night at dinner I asked, once again, how we'd gotten ourselves into this situation. I meant it as a philosophical query, not a segue into a talk about divorce. But there we were, wrecking a nice meal in our "town's" one decent restaurant by discussing splitting up and, if we did divorce, what neighborhood would I most like to live in in L.A.

Marital strife is common among home builders, I later learned. There are therapists who specialize in helping couples cope with construction-induced stress. This is because building a house is more than an onslaught of incredibly tedious decisions. It's also a physical projection of how you want to live your life. When you see it going up on a mountaintop in the remote section of an unfashionable destination in a climatically unsuitable locale, you realize that you and your husband have different visions of domestic bliss. Perhaps a therapist could have helped us, but we never got a chance to find out. We had to hurry back into the car to take the 45-minute drive to the mall before it closed.

"If you still hate it when we're done, we can sell," David said. Would I still hate it? At the rate it was going up, it seemed I'd never know.

"Would you really sell?" I asked.

"Of course. It's not worth it if you're miserable," my suddenly reasonable husband said. "But we have to finish first."

Then, in July, something miraculous happened. The sun came out. Summer arrived. Baby deer scampered over the grassland. The house still lacked essentials, like flooring and toilets, but at least some of the lights were working. We decided to camp out in our living room.

On our first morning there, we awoke to a new discovery: the sunrise. In a glass-walled house lacking curtains, you see dawn in a new way. The glowing red ball pokes up over the mountains, then slowly lessens in intensity as the land around absorbs its light. It was a glimpse of the earth's daily routine that I never saw from our apartment. The sunrise rekindled a feeling I'd occasionally had before, the reason I'd allowed myself to get pushed into this project in the first place—the sense that owning a home could be empowering, and that escaping to the country could bring a kind of wonder easily lost in the urban crush.

It still wasn't the exact home, in the exact location, that I would have chosen. But in the following months, I became less eager to sell. The great room with its glass prow and unobstructed view of the blue-gray mountains is beautiful. The pervasive quiet is relaxing. And we met some neighbors, who make it feel less like the end of the earth. The fact is, it is possible to derive pleasure from a fantasy that isn't your own. And there's even something rewarding about helping someone else achieve his dream.

Plus, the longer we wait to sell, the better our chances of turning a profit, which we can use to buy that condo in the Bahamas. ■

Home improvement wrecking your relationship? Tell us about it at: thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts

I didn't know my High Blood Pressure could lead to Erectile Dysfunction (ED).

My doctor told me LEVITRA could help.

LEVITRA is a prescription medicine for the treatment of ED.
If you have ED and high blood pressure, ask your doctor about LEVITRA.

Important Safety and Dosing Information

Men taking nitrate drugs, often used to control chest pain (also known as angina), should not take LEVITRA. Such combination could cause blood pressure to drop to an unsafe level. As with all ED drugs, there is a rare risk of an erection lasting longer than four hours. To avoid long term injury, seek immediate medical attention. LEVITRA does not protect against sexually transmitted diseases. In rare instances, men taking PDE5 inhibitors (oral erectile dysfunction medicine, including LEVITRA) reported a sudden decrease or loss of vision in one or both eyes. It is not possible to determine whether these events are related directly to these medicines or to other factors. If you experience sudden decrease or loss of vision, stop taking PDE5 inhibitors, including LEVITRA, and call a doctor right away. Discuss your medical conditions, including heart problems and medications, including alpha blockers prescribed for prostate problems or high blood pressure, with your doctor to ensure LEVITRA is right for you and that you are healthy enough for sexual activity. The starting dose of LEVITRA is 10 mg, taken no more than once per day. Your doctor will decide the dose that is right for you. In patients taking alpha blockers, your doctor may start you on a lower dose of LEVITRA. In patients taking certain medications such as ritonavir, indinavir, ketoconazole, itraconazole and erythromycin, lower doses of LEVITRA are recommended and time between doses of LEVITRA may need to be extended. In clinical trials, the most commonly reported side effects were headache, flushing and stuffy or runny nose. LEVITRA is available in 2.5 mg, 5 mg, 10-mg and 20 mg tablets.

Please see next page for Patient Information

The more you know about ED, the more you'll want to know about LEVITRA.

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Patient Information

LEVITRA® (Luh-VEE-Trah)

(vardenafil HCl) Tablets

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Read the Patient Information about LEVITRA before you start taking it and again each time you get a refill. There may be new information. You may also use it helpful to share this information with your partner. This leaflet does not take the place of talking with your doctor. You and your doctor should talk about LEVITRA when you start taking it and at regular checkups. If you do not understand the information, or have questions, talk with your doctor or pharmacist.

WHAT IMPORTANT INFORMATION SHOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT LEVITRA?

LEVITRA can cause your blood pressure to drop suddenly to an unsafe level if it is taken with certain heart medicines. With a sudden drop in blood pressure, you could get dizzy, faint, or have a heart attack or stroke.

Do not take LEVITRA if you:

- **take any type of medicine called "nitrates."**
- **use recreational drugs called "poppers" like amyl nitrate or butyl nitrite.**

(See "Who Should Not Take LEVITRA?")

Tell all your healthcare providers that you take LEVITRA. If you have emergency medical care for a heart problem, it will be important for your healthcare provider to know when you last take LEVITRA.

WHAT IS LEVITRA?

LEVITRA is a prescription medicine taken by mouth for the treatment of erectile dysfunction (ED) in men.

ED is a condition where the penis does not harden and expand (erect) when a man is sexually excited, or when he cannot keep an erection. A man who has trouble getting or keeping an erection should see his doctor for help if the condition bothers him. LEVITRA may help a man with ED get and keep an erection when he is sexually excited.

LEVITRA does not:

- cure ED
- increase a man's desire for sex
- protect a man or his partner from sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. Speak to your doctor about ways to guard against sexually transmitted diseases.
- work as a love drug of birth control

LEVITRA is only for men with ED. LEVITRA is not for women or children. LEVITRA should be taken only under a doctor's care.

HOW DOES LEVITRA WORK?

When a man is sexually stimulated, his body's normal physical response is to increase blood flow to the penis. This results in an erection. LEVITRA helps increase blood flow to the penis that may help men with ED get and keep an erection satisfactory for sexual activity. Once a man has completed sexual activity, blood flow to his penis decreases, and his erection goes away.

WHO CAN TAKE LEVITRA?

Talk to your doctor to decide if LEVITRA is right for you.

LEVITRA has been shown to be effective in men over the age of 18 years who have erectile dysfunction, including men with diabetes or who have undergone prostatectomy.

WHO SHOULD NOT TAKE LEVITRA?

Do not take LEVITRA if you:

- **take any medicines called "nitrates"** (See "What important information should you know about LEVITRA?"). nitrates are commonly taken to treat angina. Angina is a symptom of heart disease and can cause pain in your chest, jaw, or lower your arm.

  Medicines called nitrates include nitroglycerin and is found in tablets, sprays, ointments, pastes, or patches. Nitrates may also be found in other medicines have as isosorbide dinitrate or mononitrate. Some recreational drugs called "poppers" also contain nitrates, such as amyl nitrate and butyl nitrate. Do not use LEVITRA if you are using these drugs. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure if any of your medicines are nitrates.
- **you have been told by your** your doctor to not have sexual activity because of health problems. Sexual activity can put an extra strain on your heart, especially if your heart is already have from a heart blood or heart disease.
- **are allergic to LEVITRA or any of its ingredients.** The active ingredient in LEVITRA is called vardenafil. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DISCUSS WITH YOUR DOCTOR BEFORE TAKING LEVITRA?

Before taking LEVITRA, tell your doctor about all your medical problems including if you

- **have heart problems** such as angina, heart failure, irregular heartbeats, or have had a heart attack. Ask your doctor if it is safe for you to have sexual activity.
- have low blood pressure or have high blood, pressure that is not controlled
- **have had a stroke**
- **or any family members have a rare heart condition known as prolongation of the QT interval ("long QT" syndrome)**
- have liver problems
- **have kidney problems** and require dialysis
- **have retinitis pigmentosa**, a rare genetic (runs in families) eye disease
- **have ever had severe vision loss, or if you have an eye condition called** non-arteritic anterior ischemic optic neuropathy (NAION)
- have stomach ulcers
- **have a bleeding problem**
- **have a deformed penis shape** or Peyronie's disease
- **have had an infection that lasted room have a blood**
- **have blood cell disorders** such as sickle cell anemia, multiple myeloma, or leukemia

CAN OTHER MEDICATIONS AFFECT LEVITRA?

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take including prescription and non prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. LEVITRA and other medicines may affect how each other. Always check with your doctor before starting or stopping any medicines. Especially tell your doctor if you take any of the following:

- medicines called nitrates (See "What important information should you know about LEVITRA?")
- medicines called alpha-blockers. These include Hytrin® (terazosin HCl), Flomax® (tamsulosin HCl), Cardura® (doxazosin mesylate), Minipress® (prazosin HCl) or Uroxatral® (alfuzosin HCl). Alpha-blockers are sometimes prescribed for prostate problems or high blood pressure. In some patients the use of PDE5 inhibitor drugs, including LEVITRA, with alpha-blockers can lower blood pressure significantly leading to fainting. You should contact the prescribing physician if alpha-blockers or other drugs and blood blood pressure are prescribed by another healthcare provider.
- medicines that treat abnormal heartbeat. These include quinidine, procainamide, amiodarone and sotalol
- diuretics (Norvir®) or antifungal azoles (Diflucan®)
- ketoconazole or itraconazole (such as Nizoral® or Sporanox®)
- erythromycin
- liver medicines or treatments for ED

HOW SHOULD YOU TAKE LEVITRA?

Take LEVITRA exactly as your doctor prescribed. LEVITRA comes in different doses (2.5 mg, 5 mg, 10 mg and 20 mg). For most men the recommended starting dose is 10 mg. **Take LEVITRA no more than once a day.** Doses should be taken at least 24 hours apart. Some men can only take a low dose of LEVITRA because of medical conditions or medicines they take. Your doctor will prescribe the dose that is right for you.

- If you are more than 65 or have liver problems, your doctor may start you on a lower dose of LEVITRA.
- If you have prostate problems or high blood, pressure, for which you take medicines called alpha-blockers, your doctor may start you on a lower dose of LEVITRA.
- If you are taking doctor other medicines your doctor may prescribe a lower starting dose and limit you to one dose of LEVITRA in a 72-hour (3 days) period.

Take 1 LEVITRA tablet about 1 hour (60 minutes) doctor sexual activity. Some men of sexual stimulation is needed for an erection to happen with LEVITRA. LEVITRA may be taken with or without meals.

Do not change your dose of LEVITRA without talking to your doctor. Your doctor may lower your dose or have your about, depending on how your body suited to LEVITRA.

If you take too much LEVITRA, call your doctor or emergency room right away.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF LEVITRA?

The most common side effects with LEVITRA are headache, flushing, stuffy or runny nose, indigestion upset stomach, or dizziness. These side doctor usually go away after a few hours. Call your doctor if you get a side effect and nitrates you or one that will not go away.

LEVITRA may uncommonly cause:

- **an erection that lasts many (priapism).** If you get an erection and take more than 4 hours, get medical help right away. Priapism have to treated as soon as possible or taking damage can happen to your penis including the inability to have erections.
- **color vision changes,** such as seeing a blue tinge to objects or having difficulty telling the difference between the colors blue and green.

In rare instances, men taking PDE5 inhibitors (oral erectile dysfunction medicines, including LEVITRA) reported a sudden decrease or loss of vision in one or both eyes. It is not possible to determine whether these events are related directly to these medicines. In other factors such as high blood pressure or diabetes, or to a combination of these. If you experience sudden decrease or loss of vision, help taking PDE5 inhibitors, including LEVITRA, and call a doctor right away.

These are not all the side effects of LEVITRA. For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

HOW SHOULD LEVITRA BE STORED?

- Store LEVITRA at room temperature between 59° and 86° F (15° to 30° C)
- **Keep LEVITRA and all medicines out of the sight of children.**

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT LEVITRA.

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions other than those described in patient information leaflets. Do not use LEVITRA for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give LEVITRA to other people, even if they have the same symptoms that you have. It may harm them.

This leaflet summarizes the most important information about LEVITRA. If you doctor like more information, talk with your healthcare provider. You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for information about LEVITRA that is written for health professionals.

For more information you can also visit www.LEVITRA.com, or call 1-866-LEVITRA.

WHAT ARE THE INGREDIENTS OF LEVITRA

Active ingredient: vardenafil hydrochloride

Inactive ingredients: microcrystalline cellulose, crospovidone, colloidal silicon dioxide, magnesium stearate, hypromellose, polyethylene glycol, titanium dioxide, yellow ferric oxide, and red ferric oxide

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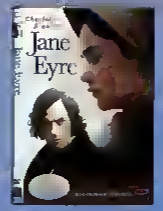

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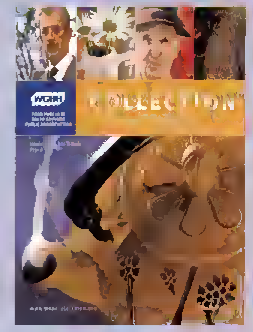

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Hand Pruners

Tools to keep your plants strong and handsome

BY HARRY SAWYERS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JONATHAN KANTOR

THOUGH IT MAY SEEM CRUEL to sever the extremities of your prized azaleas, letting nature take its shaggy, overgrown course ultimately isn't doing your plants any favors. They're far healthier and stronger when trimmed into graceful, natural shapes at the right time and in the right places. It's equally important to use the right tool, making the amputation as painless as possible for both the plant's limbs and your own.

The tool that gardeners reach for most often is the hand pruner. The smallest and keenest member of the pruning-tool tribe, its specialty is stems or branches less than ¾ inch across. For living shoots, grab a bypass-style pruner, so called because the curved blade slides past the bill like a scissor, making clean, surgical slices that heal faster. Hacking through the dead stuff is the job of an anvil pruner, which has a single blade that strikes against a flat metal plate (the anvil), like a knife on a chopping block. Switching roles is not recommended. Tough, dead wood can jam and bend a bypass blade, while an anvil can crush live tissue, leaving it vulnerable to disease.

Beyond anvil and bypass, there are myriad specialized snips and shears for the kind of ultra-precise work done by flower arrangers, fruit harvesters, and bonsai gardeners. Here are a few of our choice cutters.

1>BYPASS
The components of this Swiss pruner are secured with screws instead of rivets, making it possible to change out broken parts and dull blades. $47. felcostore.com

2>ANVIL
When the blade encounters resistance, the handles engage a ratcheting mechanism, allowing you to cut through a tough branch in several easy squeezes rather than a single strained bite. $43; leevalley.com

3>ROTATING HANDLE
The finger-side handle on this anvil pruner rotates on a geared track, which uses the natural motion of your fingers curling into a fist to magnify the force applied by the blade. Its orange plastic thumb screw permits tool-free blade changing. $30, fiskars.com

4>FLORAL SNIPS
The large loops of these "butterfly" handles allow several fingers and your entire thumb to slide through, so you can work the short, spring-free blades while leaving your fingertips free to arrange the cut stems. $11, orchardsedge.com

5>PRUNER PLUS
A bypass pruner—combined with a saw, weed digger, ruler, and screwdrivers—sets you up for a day in the garden, then folds into its cushioned handles when you're finished (INSET). $80, leatherman.com

More Pruning Power

If your plant-trimming activities go beyond the occasional tidying up of small shrubs, then you'll be needing the help of a pair of tools more potent than a hand pruner: long-handled loppers and a pruning saw. Let the loppers take over the moment you feel yourself straining your wrist or needing two hands to squeeze a pruner's jaws shut. And when faced with an even bigger job—typically, branches thicker than 1½ inches across—switch to a pruning saw. The best saws have long, triple-beveled teeth that cut on the pull stroke. And the longer the blade, the faster it cuts.
Folding saw, $47, japanwoodworker.com
Loppers, $77, felcostore.com
Leather-grip pruners, $50, garrettwede.com

6>CUT AND HOLD
These rosewood-handled harvesting shears, for cutting five roses or bunches of grapes, have springy steel between the blades to keep a gentle grip on a cut stem as you can reach, cut, and retrieve with only one hand. $22, leevalley.com

7>DOUBLE CUTTER
An unusual double-cut pruner severs delicate five stems neatly from two sides, so you don't have to think about blade position. The blades meet in the middle, though the edges are offset slightly to avoid colliding. $45, gardenersedge.com

8>POLE PRUNER
A 44-inch bypass pruner extends your reach overhead or into dense, prickly growth. Once you make the cut, serrated teeth grip the trimming until you release the handles. $65; orchardsedge.com

9>SOUTHPAW SPECIAL
One of the precious few tools specially engineered for lefties, this bypass model has a rotating grip on the finger-side handle that turns as you squeeze, your fist reducing the blisters and finger fatigue common at the end of a day of pruning. $60, felcostore.com

10>NO-SLIP SNIPS
These leather-handled bypass snips have a serrated blade that holds wiry stems in place for cutting. It's the standard harvesting and pruning sécateur for vineyard workers in France. $33, leevalley.com

6
9
8
We prefer these coil springs over the "Slinky"-type because they're strong, move smoothly, and don't pinch. Plus you can oil them.
7
10

TOOL SCHOOL
Roger Cook gives Norm Abram a pruning lesson in **Norm's Notebook**, page 103

Learn how and when to prune small trees and shrubs: **thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts**

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*MyGIG in-dash DVD capability is not available in all states. See your dealer for details. Starting at $19,885. As shown $29,480. MSRPs exclude tax. Star ratings are part of the U.S. Department of Transportation's SaferCar.gov program (safercar.gov). Chrysler Financial is a business unit of DaimlerChrysler Financial Services.
GRAB LIFE BY THE HORNS
DODGE

Bye-bye, Bambi

>> Deer may be a wonder to behold—until they get ahold of your leafy greens. Here's how to keep the plant-gobbling critters at bay

BY **MAX ALEXANDER**
ILLUSTRATIONS BY **ZOHAR LAZAR**

A FEW YEARS AGO marketing executive and green thumb David Jensen of Clare, Michigan, moved outside the city limits so he could grow a bigger, better garden—only to watch it get devoured by deer that seemed to fear nothing. "You could go out and clap at them, and they would just look at you," says Jensen today. He was so inspired to control the critters that he quit his job and opened Deer Resistant Landscape Nursery, which specializes in plants and products that limit the extent of the damage.

Jensen's business is booming, thanks to the proliferation of hungry deer in American towns and suburbs. Their population is at an all-time high—"more now than when the Pilgrims landed," says Michael Conover, a professor of wildlife at Utah State University. He cites the decline of hunting as a major reason that deer are encroaching onto residential lots: "Deer have

DIY Deer Repellent

When *TOH* design director Amy Rosenfeld built a house in Ulster County, New York, she heard lots of horror stories about deer ravaging local gardens. Then her neighbor Barbara Fornal, an herbalist, shared this recipe for "deer juice," which Rosenfeld applies vigilantly. "It totally works," she says. "When people come over, they're always like, 'How do you have hostas?'"

Here's how to mix up a batch for yourself:

1 bar of Fels Naptha soap
2 bunches of scallions, roughly chopped
2 heads of garlic, cloves separated
4 eggs
Chili powder, to taste

1> Fill ½ of a 5-gallon bucket with hot water.
2> Shave soap into bucket to dissolve.
3> Place scallions, garlic, eggs, and chili powder in a large piece of doubled cheesecloth. Tie up ends of cloth tightly; use a wooden spoon to crack the eggs. Place pouch in bucket.
4> Fill the bucket with more water; cover tightly with lid. Place in shaded area. Let sit for 1 week.
5> Transfer in batches to a pump sprayer. Apply after each rainfall or every 2 weeks.

lost their fear of man, basically."

Handsome as they are, deer really don't belong around your house. Besides destroying expensive plantings, deer carry ticks that spread Lyme disease and cause more than a half-million auto collisions each year. Unfortunately, some of their favorite snacks are common landscape plants, including roses, tulips, hostas, many ornamental shrubs such as rhododendron and yew, to say nothing of leafy vegetable gardens.

But trying to fend off the interlopers can be just as frustrating as having Bambi and friends devour your hard-earned landscaping. Deer are intelligent and highly adaptable creatures, when they get hungry enough, they'll test the limits of just about any preventive measure. That's why experts recommend an "integrated management plan"—that is, using a variety of techniques.

"You have to keep them guessing," says *This Old House* landscape contractor Roger Cook, a veteran of the deer wars. "Eventually deer will get used to anything, so I always recommend rotating repellents and combining them with other tools like scare tactics and fencing."

Here is a look at the options.

PUT IN A BARRIER FENCE.

Among the most foolproof deterrents are physical barriers like fences. Deer are agile jumpers, so fences need to be high—typically about 8 feet. Black propylene deer fencing in a 2-inch net ($2 to $4 per foot) is virtually invisible in a wooded setting and relatively easy to install; metal sleeves are pounded into the ground every 15 feet, and thin metal posts are inserted in the sleeves. The netting is clipped to the posts, then stretched tight.

ONLINE VIDEO
Watch a video of *TOH* landscape contractor Roger Cook deer proofing a yard: thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts

Of course, fencing your whole lot is not always feasible—or desirable—and motivated deer will find any opening, such as the driveway. But a fence can effectively enclose a vegetable or cutting garden near the house.

SPRAY THEM AWAY.

Spritzing on liquids with an offensive odor or taste is the least expensive way to repel them—with varying degrees of success. Commercial products like Deer Off (based on eggs, hot peppers, and garlic) or Plantskydd (a blood-meal solution) are sprayed directly on plants to render them unpalatable. Other products contain predator scents like coyote urine that can be deposited strategically around the yard. Some gardeners swear by odiferous homebrews made from ingredients like rotten eggs, chili powder, and scented soaps (one *This Old House* staffer has great success with the recipe shown above).

Any spray—commercial or homemade—needs to be reapplied frequently as plants grow or rain washes it away. And as Roger points out, seriously overpopulated deer herds won't be dissuaded. "A deer that's starving will eat anything, no matter what you spray on it."

SCARE THEM OFF

Often deer can be kept at bay with scare tactics, usually a surprise burst of water or a loud noise. One popular product is the Scarecrow ($89; contech-inc.com), which combines a motion detector and a sprinkler that sprays

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY, PAGE 112

PHOTO: WEBB CHAPPELL

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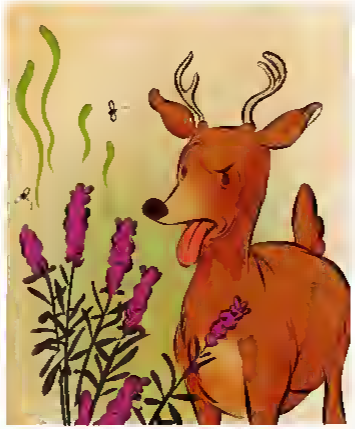
Plants Deer Dislike

Thanks to their fuzzy leaves, strong fragrance, or bitter taste, the following plants aren't among deer's favorite nibbles. (For more listings, go to thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts.)



SPRING-BLOOMING PERENNIALS

Bleeding heart (*Dicentra spectabilis*)> Shade-loving, fernlike plant with pendulous heart-shaped flowers; hardy to -35° F.

Bluebell (*Hyacinthoide hispanica*)> Bulb plant with small bell-shaped blue, white, or pink flower clusters; hardy to -25°F.

Crocus (*Crocus sp.*)> Low-clumping bulb plant with white, yellow, or purple flowers; hardiness varies.

Daffodil (*Narcissus sp.*)> Bulb plant with showy yellow or white blooms; hardiness varies.

Fritillaria (*Fritillaria imperialis*)> Bulb plant with bell-shaped orange, yellow, or red flowers atop stalklike stems; hardy to -5°F.

SUMMER-BLOOMING PERENNIALS

Bluebeard (*Caryopteris*)> Shrubby plant with deep blue flower clusters; hardy to -5° F.

Catmint (*Nepeta faassenii*)> Compact relative of mint; small purple flowers; hardy to -25° F.

Hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*)> Large-leaved plant with purplish flower spikes; hardy to -5° F.

Lavender (*Lavandula*)> Sun-loving, aromatic flowering herb; many varieties; hardiness varies.

Monkshood (*Aconitum*)> Shade tolerant, with hoodlike purple-blue flowers; hardy to -35° F.

Mullein (*Verbascum*)> Woolly leaf rosettes with tall flower spikes; hardy to -25° F.

GROUNDCOVERS

Bugleweed (*Ajuga reptans*)> Creeping evergreen with dark blue flower whorls; hardy to -35° F.

Lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*)> Bell-shaped waxy white flowers; hardy to -45° F.

Pachysandra (*Pachysandra terminalis*)> Shade lover; small white or pink flowers; hardy to -25° F.

Spotted deadnettle (*Lamium*)> Variegated leaves with white or pink flowers; hardy to -25° F.

SHRUBS

Aralia (*Araliaceae*)> Large, bright green foliage with small white flowers; hardy to 5° F.

Andromeda (*Pieris japonica*)> Rounded shrub with hanging white or pink flowers clusters; hardy to -5° F.

Boxwood (*Buxus*)> Compact, tiny-leaved hedging shrub; hardy to -5° F.

Bush cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticose*)> Extremely cold-hardy, roselike flowers; hardy to -35° F.

Oleander (*Nerium*)> Tall, evergreen shrub with large white or pink flowers; hardy to 15° F.

Russian olive (*Elaeagnus augustifolia*)> Willowlike leaves and yellowish summer flowers; hardy to -35° F.

water when deer (or other critters) cross its path. Placement is everything with such products, and hungry deer may eventually learn to ignore them. Some homeowners find that a vigilant dog is the best scare tactic, since canine predators like coyotes and wolves are deer's natural enemies.

PLANT THEIR LEAST-FAVORITE FOODS. Experts agree that overall, the best defense is a good offense—landscaping around your home with plants that are not to deer's liking. "Many plants have their own repellent built in," says Jensen. Deer will usually turn away from highly aromatic or poisonous plants (such as foxglove), and those with fuzzy leaves, for specific suggestions, see the box above.

"If you have a deer problem, always try to plant from deer-resistant lists," says *TOH*'s Roger Cook. "At least it gives you a fighting chance." ■

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Spruce Up Your Deck

Give those tired old boards a rejuvenating spa treatment.

BY SAL VAGLICA PHOTOGRAPHS BY KRISTINE LARSEN

BY THE TIME CONTRACTOR STEPHEN BONESTEEL arrived on the scene, the condition of the pine deck was bleak. Twenty years of harsh upstate New York weather without a lick of care had turned its once-bright boards a weather-beaten gray, flecked with slimy algae, splotches of mildew, and black leaf stains. In short, the deck was a mess.

Still, even wood this neglected can be brought back to respectability, as Bonesteel demonstrated for *This Old House*. Over the course of a week, he power-washed and hand-scrubbed the deck back to a semblance of newness, then brushed on a protective coat of semitransparent stain.

Between refinishings, the best way to keep a deck in shape is with light but regular broom-washings using dish soap and water. Just lather off dirt, leaves, and bugs; then rinse with a garden hose. "Clean it at least once a season," Bonesteel says, especially in spring, when pollen provides a food source for mildew. Then, every three or so years, follow the steps on these pages for a deck that looks—and lasts—its best.

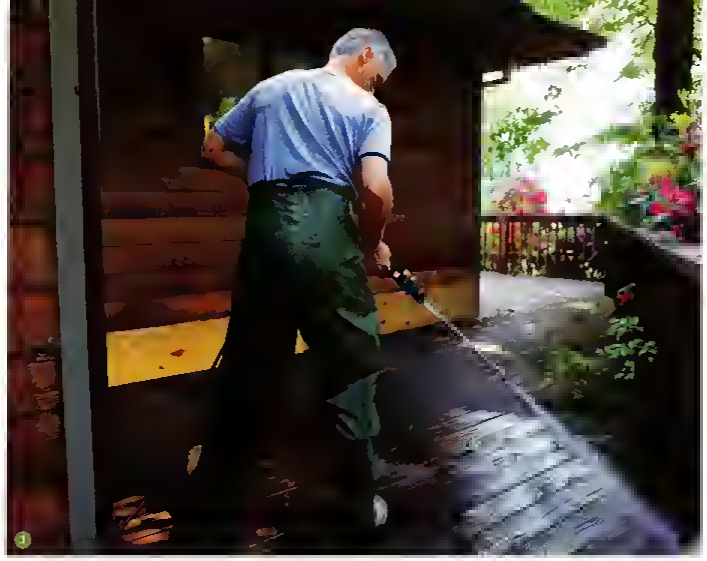
ALL DECKED OUT: With the mildew and algae gone and a fresh coat of finish, the old deck is once again a space to be enjoyed.

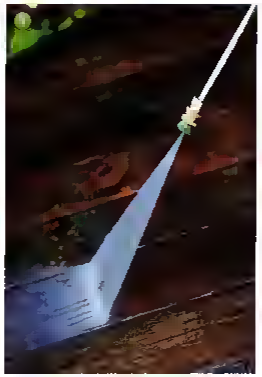
Clean the Wood

1 | WASH AND WET. Wait for an overcast day when evaporation from the deck will be slower. Remove furniture and plants, and trim or tie back any branches touching the deck. Wet down or cover adjacent foliage and siding, and protect yourself with rubber boots and rain pants. Wash leaves and dirt off the deck and railings with a spray from a garden hose or a pressure washer set at 3,000 psi and fitted with a gentle 40-degree fan nozzle. For maximum efficiency, hold the nozzle tip about 18 inches from the wood.

2 | SCRUB. With the deck still wet, put on latex gloves and dip a brush with stiff, chemical-resistant bristles into the cleaning solution (see "Recipe for Success," below). Scrub the wood in the direction of the grain. Work in small sections, starting with the top rail, then the balusters, posts, and bottom rail. Tackle the deck boards last: no more than 200 square feet at a time. The soap bubbles will help you see which areas you've covered.

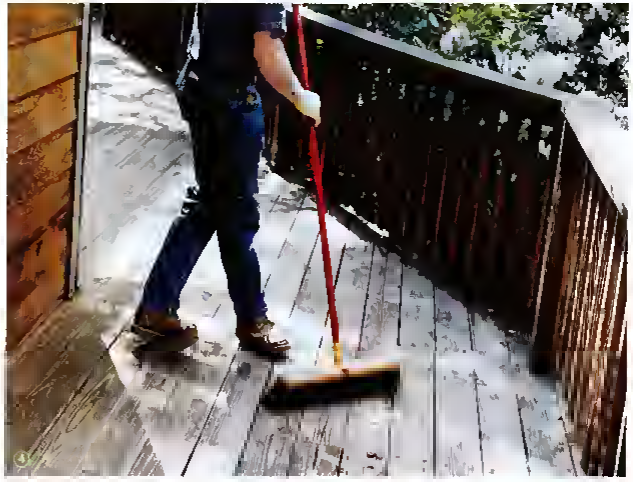
3 | POWER RINSE. Wait at least 15 minutes, then rinse off the solution completely using a garden hose or a pressure washer with a 40-degree fan nozzle. Hold the pressure washer wand no closer than 6 to 8 inches from the wood. The spray should span the width of one board and hit the surface at a 45-degree angle. Move steadily, rinsing one board at a time. Never let the wand halt in one place while the spray is on.





TIP

To avoid gouging wood when pressure-washing, begin with the nozzle held at a conservative distance, and move closer as needed.

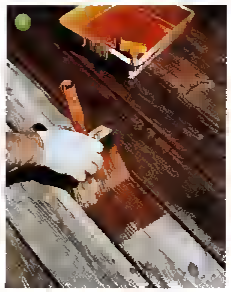


Staining Steps

4 | LET DRY. Before stain can be applied, the wood must dry or it won't absorb the finish. Three or four consecutive days without rain is enough time in most climates. (When in doubt, check with a moisture meter; when it reads 15 percent or less, the wood is ready to coat.) Sweep the deck clean before applying stain.

5 | STAIN THE RAILINGS. Using a synthetic filament brush slightly wider than the deck's boards, apply the stain full strength in the same order you scrubbed: top rail, balusters and posts, bottom rail, and then the decking. Finish all four sides of each baluster before moving on to the next one; brush up drips and runs immediately. For an even color, stir the stain frequently during application.

6 | STAIN THE DECK. Brush the deck's boards one at a time with long, even strokes, working with the grain. Keep a wet edge to prevent lap marks, and immediately brush out any pools of stain. When you're finished, let the deck dry for at least two days before walking on it or replacing the furniture.



For a gallery of our favorite deck designs, plus a guide to decking materials, go to: thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts

Recipe for Success

1 part chlorine bleach

3–5 parts water

Plus, enough powdered laundry detergent to make the solution sudsy. (Avoid liquid detergent. It might contain ammonia, which releases dangerous chlorine gas when mixed with bleach.)

You can buy a deck cleaner at the hardware store, but it's cheaper to make your own. The folks at the USDA's Forest Products Laboratory recommend the recipe at left, which is strong enough to cut through dirt, mildew, and algae and restore the old gray wood to something close to its original color, but won't turn the wood white and fuzzy. It's safe for use on pine or tropical hardwoods, not on cedar or redwood. For those softer woods, you need a commercial cleaner that contains oxygen bleach—sodium percarbonate—a gentler mildew killer.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN S.

The Finish Line

Choosing a finish for a softwood deck is a three-way tug of war between aesthetics, practicality, and protection. Favor any one characteristic, and you have to give up a bit of the other two. For instance, if showing off the beauty of new wood is top priority, a clear finish is the obvious choice. But that clarity also lets in the sun's destructive UV rays, and that means more frequent reapplications—every six to 24 months. By contrast, solid stains offer great sun protection but hide the wood's grain under an opaque film. They have about a four-year life span, but like all film-forming finishes, they tend to peel or crack.

The most popular deck finishes are semitransparent stains, which, not coincidentally, are also the easiest to maintain. They contain more sun-blocking pigments than clear finishes, but not enough to completely obscure the wood grain. And because they penetrate the surface, there's no film to fail. Just recoat as needed, generally after three years.

After 20 or so years of reapplications, penetrating stains will eventually saturate the wood's fibers, says Cabot Inc.'s Matt McKay, and prevent adhesion. At that point, the wood will only accept a top coat of solid stain.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY PAGE 112

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THE HOME DEPOT

Rain Drain

>> A drywell is the simple solution to rainwater runoff

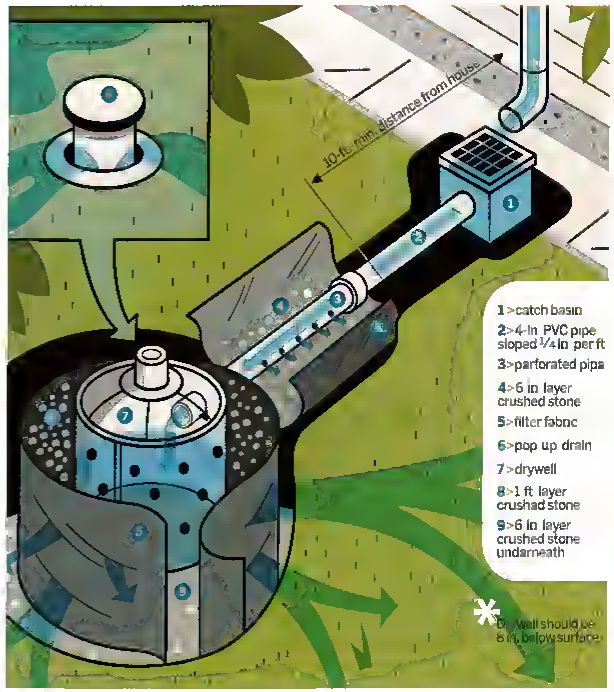
BY SAL VAGLICA ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY CAMPBELL

GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS do a great job of channeling rainwater from the roof to the ground. But if all that runoff has no place to go, the results can be disastrous: flooded basements, eroded hillsides, and lawns turned into soggy swamps. That's when you need a drywell—a glorified hole in the ground that receives and safely discharges surplus H_2O.

The typical drywell system has three basic components: the drywell itself, which is a bottomless container buried 6 to 8 inches below grade; a catch basin positioned under the downspout to filter out leaves and other gutter debris; and an underground plastic pipe connecting the two. The catch basin and pipe convey the water to the drywell, where it collects long enough to percolate gradually into the surrounding soil. To promote drainage and to keep the drywell from getting clogged with mud, the whole assembly is encircled by a layer of crushed stone wrapped in filter fabric.

The most common type of drywell is shaped like a barrel, with an open bottom and perforated sides to provide water with a means of escape. Properly installed, a 24-inch-diameter barrel can handle the runoff from an inch of water per hour falling on a 1,000-square-foot roof, provided the soil drains reasonably well. If you have a bigger roof or live in an area with drenching rains or nonporous soil, you may need the larger capacity of a half-pipe-type drywell, which looks like a miniature Quonset hut and sits in a long, shallow trench. (Don't know what type of soil you have? Go to thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts for instructions on how to test it yourself.)

Drywells should be at least 10 feet away from the foundation and trees, and 3 feet from neighboring property lines. If the distance from the house is greater than 10 feet, *This Old House* landscape contractor Roger Cook bridges it with perforated drainpipe. And as a precaution against overflow, he also installs a pop up drain atop the barrel at ground level. Once the installation is complete, that little pop-up is the only visible sign of this subterranean water-management system.


10-ft. min. distance from house
1>catch basin
2>4-in. PVC pipe sloped ¼ in. per ft.
3>perforated pipe
4>6 in. layer crushed stone
5>filter fabric
6>pop up drain
7>drywell
8>1 ft. layer crushed stone
9>6 in. layer crushed stone underneath
* Drywell should be 6 in. below surface

ONLINE VIDEO
Watch a video of *TOH* landscape contractor Roger Cook installing a drywell. thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts

Calculate the size drywell you need thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts

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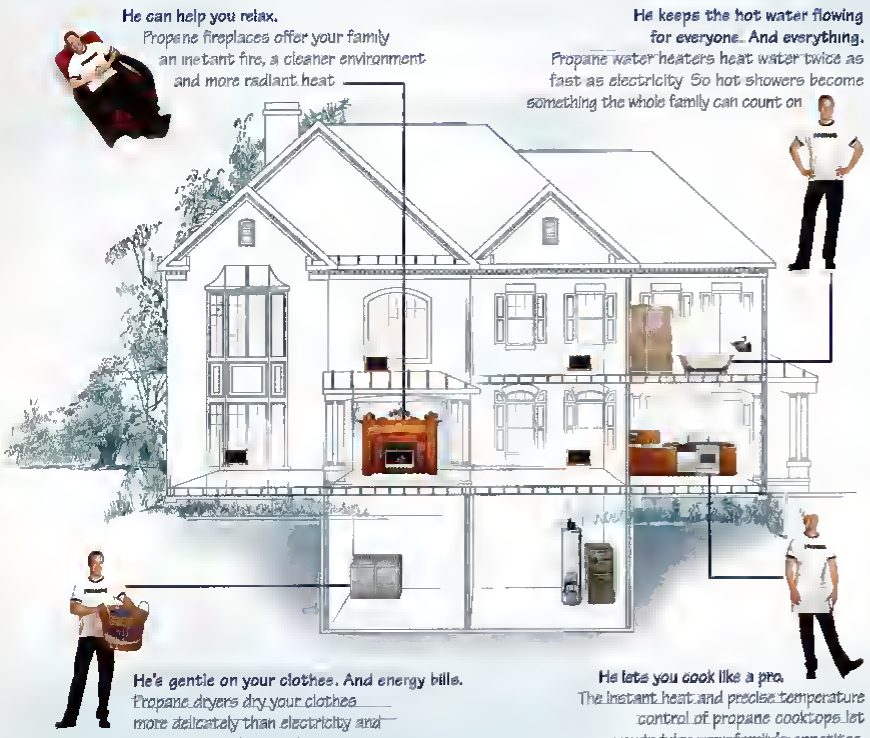

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Building a Raised Planting Bed

BY HARRY SAWYERS PHOTOGRAPHS BY KOLIN SMITH

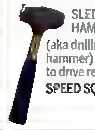
COST: $80 to $200 for gravel and soil. $250 to $1,500 for the lumber.

TIME: 8 hours

DIFFICULTY: Moderate. Digging for the heavy timbers and positioning them is tough work, but at least the hardest part comes first.

TOOLS FOR THIS PROJECT

- CIRCULAR SAW and HANDSAW
- SPADE
- TRENCHING SHOVEL
- HOE
- FRAMING SQUARE
- 4-FOOT LEVEL
- DRILL/DRIVER with an extended ½-inch spade bit
- SLEDGE HAMMER (aka drilling hammer) to drive rebar
- SPEED SQUARE



SO LAST SUMMER'S HOMEGROWN TOMATO CROP was more of a bummer than a bumper, and after a few exploratory backyard digs this spring it seems less and less likely that you're going to hit pay dirt. But that doesn't mean you should go hungry. By building a raised planting bed, you can set up your seedlings with a loamy home as fecund as the Fertile Crescent.

Surrounded by sturdy timbers and filled with healthy, rich soil, the raised bed lets you customize and optimize your plants' nutrients and moisture. It also brings the garden to the gardener, allowing you to easily maintain your plants without stooping to the ground and without trampling the nearby roots as you walk through. And if you build it on an early spring weekend, as *This Old House* technical editor Mark Powers shows on the following pages, you can get a head start on the planting season because the elevated soil heats up sooner than the ground. Then not only will the handsome structure help define your garden but never again will bad dirt stand between you and a good BLT.

Frame: 6x6 cedar timbers, from Dykes Lumber, dykeslumber.com
Plants shown: lavender, creeping rosemary, golden thyme, Cuban oregano, basil, arugula, marigolds, sweet red pepper, and ruby chard.

FOR COMPLETE INSTRUCTIONS, TURN THE PAGE AND UNFOLD

Everyone said it would be too much for a single mom to handle. But Amy bought the old house anyway. She put in floors, hung cabinets, added on a room, and finished the entire attic. Herself. Over the last eleven years, Amy has worn a path to her local Home Depot®, collecting materials, gaining confidence, gathering steam. And in the process, she's proved just how much she really can handle.

See Amy's story, and others, at **homedepot.com/truestories**

You can do it. We can help.℠

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THE HOME DEPOT®

HOMEOWNER'S HANDBOOK
WEEKEND PROJECT SERIES

{overview}

A RAISED BED IS NOTHING MORE than a giant planter, a box of topsoil with timbers for sides. You can build it in any sunny, level spot, or you can excavate a slightly sloping location to create a level surface (though this adds to the digging). The box itself can be made from any size lumber—the larger the pieces, the fewer you'll need. Cedar or redwood timbers look nice and are naturally weather-resistant. Pressure treated wood is a less expensive, albeit less polished, alternative, and preliminary EPA tests have shown today's treated lumber to be a safe material for use in vegetable and herb beds.

Before you build your bed, you'll need to figure out how big you want it to be. "The beauty of a raised bed is its accessibility," says *This Old House* landscape contractor Roger Cook. "It should rise at least a foot off the ground—this gives the plant roots room to grow and gives the gardener's back a break." Stick with 4 feet or less for the width, says Roger, so you can reach the middle of the plantings from either side, when it comes to length, the limit depends on the size of your lumber. If you use the same beefy 6x6 timbers shown here, you shouldn't go beyond 10 feet because the timbers will get too heavy. To cover a larger area, build side-by-side beds with room to walk between them.

Because the bed's first timbers are partially buried, you'll need to guard against rot by laying 2 inches of gravel beneath them. This promotes drainage and also provides a solid footing. For the bed itself, line the bottom with more gravel and drill weep holes through the timbers' sides.

Most of the precision and muscle work in building the bed comes in digging the trenches and leveling and squaring up the first course of timbers. Once the first course is laid properly and spiked to the earth with rebar, assembling the rest of the bed is a matter of piecing the sides together like building blocks. The whole thing fastens together with timber screws. Then you simply add a railing, shovel in the topsoil, and plant your new garden.

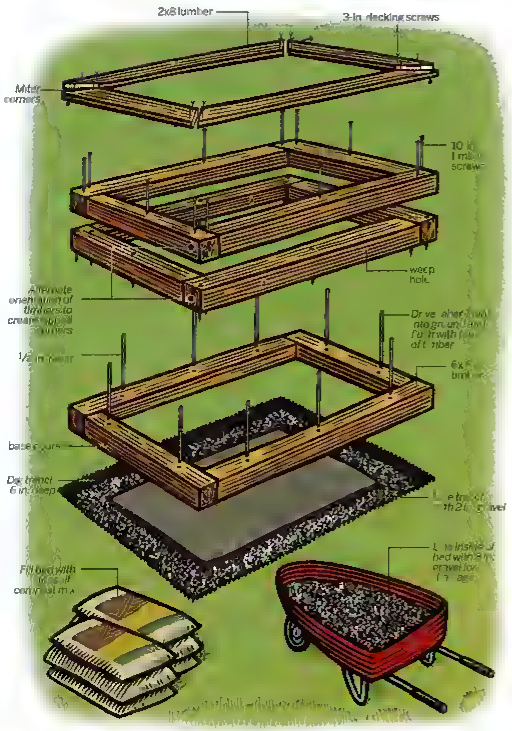


ILLUSTRATION BY **GREGORY NEMEC**

BUILD YOUR SKILL
Learn how to make straight cuts in thick timbers with a circular saw
Workshop, p. 103

Shopping List

1 | 6x6 TIMBERS The beds 4 sides each need 3 courses of timbers to rise more than a foot above ground. For a total of 12 timbers. Because it's best to have full pieces on each side, buy stock lengths at least as long as the dimensions of your bed. Make sure each timber is straight and clear of knots on at least one side.

2 | 2x8 LUMBER to make a railing to cap the bed's walls.

3 | ½-INCH REBAR to secure the first course of timbers to the ground. These are usually sold in 18- to 24-inch lengths. Both are long enough to secure 6x6 timbers at least a foot into the ground.

4 | 10-INCH SELF-TAPPING TIMBER SCREWS, such as Timberlok and Timbrex brands, to fasten the sides together.

5 | CONSTRUCTION ADHESIVE to fasten the railing to the timbers.

6 | PEA GRAVEL for drainage under the walls and at the base of the bed. Most home centers carry either ½- or 1-cubic-foot bags. To determine the cubic footage you'll need for 3 inches of fill at the base, divide the square footage of your bed by 4. To figure out how much you'll need for 2 inches of fill under the timbers, add the length and width of the bed (in feet) and divide that number by 6.

7 | TOPSOIL/COMPOST MIX Most home centers carry 2- or 3-cubic-foot bags of properly amended soil. Because the bed is just about 1 foot deep (with the gravel layer at the bottom), the square footage of the bed roughly equals the cubic footage of soil you'll need to fill it. Throw in an extra bag to account for settling.

{step by step}

1

Mark the bed's outline »

The timbers that make up the walls of the bed will butt against one another end-to-side at the corners. So to determine how long to make the timbers, subtract 5½ inches (the true width of a 6x6) from the length of each side. Using a circular saw and handsaw, cut 12 timbers to length.

Clear the site of obstructions and arrange 4 timbers in an outline of the planned bed, butting each timber's end against the next timber's side. Using a spade or square-edged shovel, mark the bed's outline by cutting vertically through the turf both inside and outside the loose-laid timbers' perimeter (RIGHT).

2

« Dig trenches for the walls

Set aside the timbers. Using a spade, remove all the turf within the outer lines. Switch to a trenching shovel and dig a 6-inch-deep trench in the outline of the timbers.

Fill the trench with 2 inches of gravel (LEFT). Use a hoe to spread the gravel level.

TIP > Roll up the turf you remove and reuse it to patch your lawn. Place the soil you dig out onto a tarp and use it inside the finished bed.

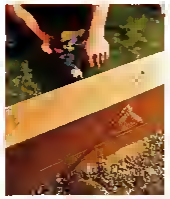
Set the first course of timbers »

Using a drill/driver fitted with a ½-inch extended spade bit, drill holes through the 4 base timbers every 2 feet. Lay the timbers in the trenches with all the pilot holes vertical. Arrange them so the butt end of one meets the side of the next in a clockwise fashion.

Using a 4-foot level and framing square, level and square the 4 timbers, adding or removing gravel as necessary. Place the level atop a scrap of lumber laid diagonally across the timbers to check for level corner to corner (RIGHT).

Using a sledgehammer, drive rebar through the pilot holes in the timbers and 1 foot into the ground (INSET), checking for level and square as you go. Hammer the rebar flush with the 4 timbers' surfaces.

4



Assemble the bed's walls

Lay the next course of timbers on top of the base course, but arrange them counterclockwise so they overlap at the corners in the opposite direction from the first course. This will create a lapped pattern.

Using a drill/driver, drive timber screws downward through the top course and into the timber beneath (LEFT), two at each corner and one in the center of each side.

Using an extended ½-inch spade bit, drill weep holes for drainage through the second course every 4 feet (INSET). Drill from the outside in, to keep the holes looking neat, and angle the bit upward so water will flow down and out.

Lay the third course of timbers clockwise on top of the second, lapping the corners again. Fasten them to the second course with timber screws in the same manner.

TIP Slip a short length of ¾-inch copper pipe into the weep holes to protect the wood and make clearing clogs easier.

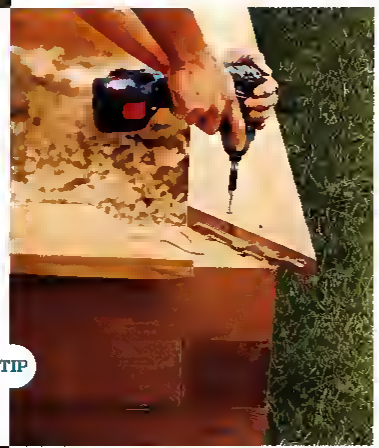
Install the cap railing

Lay a 2x8 board on top of one wall. Line it up flush with the inside edge. Mark the board where it meets the inner corners. Using a speed square, extend this mark at a 45° angle projecting outward.

Using a circular saw guided by the square, cut the ends at 45° degree miters. Repeat this process on the other three sides of the bed until you have a frame of 2x8s that sits flush with the inner edge of the bed and protrudes 2 inches over the outer edge.

Apply construction adhesive along the top of the timbers and on the board's mitered edges. Lay the boards in place. Fasten them to the timbers with 3-inch decking screws every 12 to 16 inches (RIGHT). Drill a horizontal pilot hole through the rail's edge and across the mitered corner. Drive a 3-inch screw into the joint to prevent it from opening.

TIP When measuring and marking the rail, lightly number each piece and its corresponding side, and make small pencil marks across both to give you a reference for lining up the boards.



5

6

Fill the bed

Shovel a 3-inch layer of gravel across the bottom of the bed and smooth it with the hoe.

Fill the bed with topsoil (LEFT), tamping it lightly every 6 inches to reduce settling later. Fill to within 2 to 3 inches of the top of the bed. Rake the soil smooth and plant.

For an easy, efficient watering solution, learn how to install drip irrigation. **thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts**

{ buying guide }

A few accessories can improve a raised bed's efficiency, help manage its growth, or simply add to its visual appeal.

TRELLISES Give a raised bed more dimensionality by growing vines on these steel topiary forms. Dome top, $125; Gothic spire, $100; web obelisk, $40; all from English Creek Gardens, englishcreekgardens.com

CLOCHES Shelter delicate plants and help retain moisture and heat in early spring with a glass cloche. Copper leading divides the panes of this dome-shaped cloche, while the straight sides of the flat-topped cloche shelters plants up to a foot tall. Multipanel, $110; flat top, $42; both from English Creek Gardens, englishcreekgardens.com

WATERING WAND Reach into the bed to soak plants' bases with a gentle stream from this hose attachment, which features a handy shut-off valve. $12, from Rain Wand, rainwand.com

TOMATO-GROWING ACCESSORIES This perforated plastic mulch retains moisture, and the sturdy steel "ladders" support tomato vines heavy with ripe fruit. The bright color reflects red light to the plants, triggering proteins that stimulate vibrant growth, according to USDA test results. Mulch, $10; ladders, $60 for 5; both from Gardener's Supply Company; gardeners.com

PLANT STARTERS Start your seeds indoors in late winter with a soil-filled peat pot or a thatched coir nest pot, which needs no soil. Once a seedling sprouts, plant the entire pot; its roots will grow right through the walls. Nest pots, $12 for 30, from Gardener's Supply Company; Gardeners.com. Peat pots, $4 a dozen, from Kmart; kmart.com

PHOTOS: JEFF HARRIS

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY, PAGE 112

MAXIMUM CURB APPEAL
Colorful perennials layered on both sides of the fence greet visitors, while a bracketed lamppost and garden gate lead them to the front walk. A flowering 'Kousa' dogwood tree is scaled to the house and provides a front yard focal point.

SMALL YARD BIG IMPACT

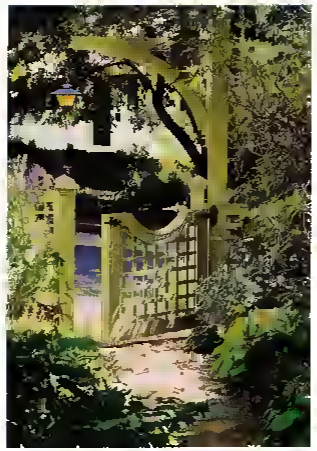
7 WAYS to turn a little lot into a series of useful, beautiful OUTDOOR ROOMS

by Christopher J. Cohan
produced by Kathryn Keller
photographs by Matthew Benson
illustrations by Gregory Nemec

As a landscape architect, I often feel that small properties suffer from not so benign neglect with lawn carpeting nearly every inch of ground except where plantings are crowded up against the house—all in the hope that open space will make the yard feel larger. But just the opposite is true. If you want to create a feeling of expansiveness where space is at a premium, you're better off carving out distinct garden areas and outdoor rooms. Consider my own property, which is shown on these pages, a case study. An ornamental border along the street adds curb appeal, an entry garden welcomes visitors, there's a private patio for dining with family and friends, and a woodsy backyard allows for lounge chair relaxing—all on a 60-by-100 foot lot. Not only do the "rooms" I designed make the yard more functional, they keep from revealing the whole place at once, so there's a wonderful sense of discovery as you move through them.

Designing for a small yard follows the same rules as for a larger one, of course—you just have to make every inch count. Pay special attention to hardscape features such as fences, walls, and paved areas, make sure they have the right scale and proportion. Along with established trees and shrubs, they lend structure year-round. Put the front yard to work to establish a mood—here, an English cottage-style garden to suit the cozy 1924 Tudor Revival house. Layer plants of various heights, colors, and textures to add depth to the landscaping, and choose varieties with successive flowering times, so something is always in bloom. Details matter, especially in a small space where they're right in front of you. So personalize your home's exterior with carefully chosen hardware, lighting, containers, and trellises that tie it into the landscape. Last, don't forget to plan and plant with views from inside the house in mind—and illuminate the garden at night. After all, what better way to gain ground than to blur the lines between outdoors and in?

1: Create an intimate ENTRY GARDEN.



A garden arch makes a strong visual connection between the landscape and the house, and signals visitors where to enter. Here, an exaggerated lamppost with a curved support bracket gracefully serves the same purpose. Shiny copper caps top the posts around the scalloped lattice gate, adding another level of detail. A Japanese red maple brushes the top of the arch and a rhododendron reaches around the post to soften the edges of the structure and help blend it into its surroundings. A bronze light hangs directly over the latch-side post and casts an inviting warm glow. In the evening, the wooden arch, stained a soft green, almost disappears, and the lamp appears to float in the air.

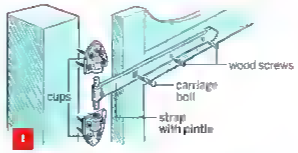
The paving on a front walkway should signal the style of a home and garden, too. This one consists of irregular multicolored pieces of slate—probably original to the 1920s house. All it needed was a good cleaning and some repair to the mortar joints to extend its life. Now, lined with hosta and Japanese painted fern where it's shady, and white 'Annabelle' hydrangeas, Nikko Blue hydrangeas, and ever blooming pink roses where there's filtered light, it serves as the right kind of casual pathway for the informal cottage home.

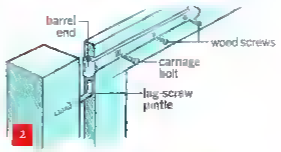
Christopher J. Cohan is a landscape architect in Rye, New York.

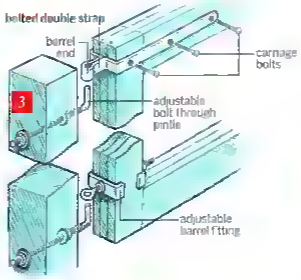
GARDEN GATE

Nothing's nicer than swinging open a gate that says you're home. Or sadder than wrestling with one that scrapes the ground. Sturdy construction is key to preventing sags. And so is the right hanging hardware, usually a pair of sturdy strap hinges sized to cover one-fourth to one-third of the gate's width. Here's how three styles from Snug Cottage Hardware (snugcottagehardware.com) ably do the job. 1. Surface mounted with a cupped pintle. On the decorative galvanized steel hinges used in this project, the pin (or pintle) is part of the strap, which is attached with a carriage bolt and wood screws. The bottom "cup" is screwed to the face of the post, and the pintle set into it. Another cup covers the pintle top and is screwed in, making for a very rigid hinge that can carry up to 150 pounds. 2. Open-topped lag screw pintle. A J-shaped pintle is lagged into the side of the post, ready to receive the barrel and of the strap. This most basic style allows for more swing and makes the gate easy to remove. 3. Bolted double strap. For the heaviest-duty field or driveway gates, a double strap wraps both sides of the stile and rail; the pintle is bolted through the side of the post. The bottom fitting adjusts easily if the gate gets out of kilter.

MARK POWERS





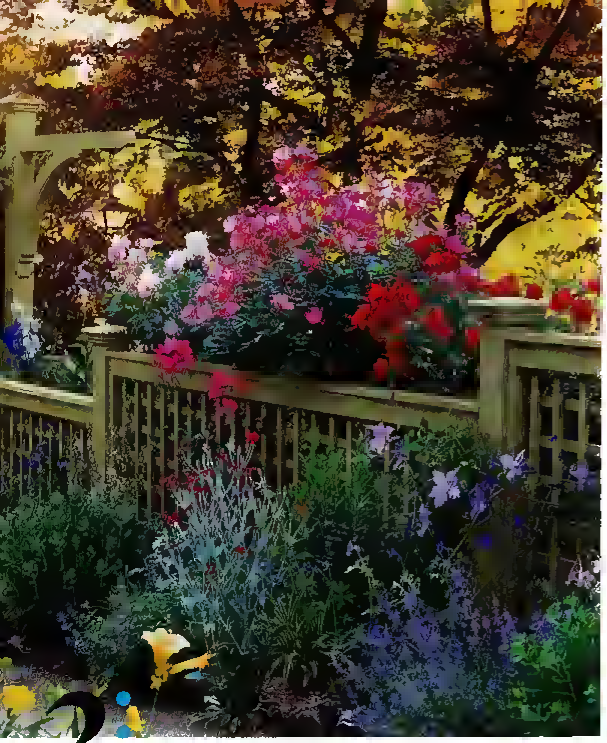


2: Build a walled

A patio can serve as an outdoor dining room that's the center of warm-weather entertaining. When planning one, it is important to consider the paving material and how it will be laid. Larger spaces may be paved with several materials—with a brick "rug" in the center and a contrasting stone border, for example—which would be too busy for a small space. Here, cut bluestone pavers of different sizes are laid in a random pattern; they are dry set in keeping with the informal garden, and volunteer flowers and moss creep up through the joints. A low perimeter wall made from concrete block and finished with stucco and a bluestone cap further defines the 14 by 18 foot paved area, which is situated along the side of the house. The wall does double-duty as a shelf for containers, a serving station for food and drink, or a perch for guests.

Where houses are nearby, it's important to create a sense of privacy. This woodland edge of trees, shrubs, ferns, and shade-loving ground covers creates a buffer from the neighbors, while letting light and air filter through. To maintain views into the front and back yards, those edges of the patio are planted with medium-height flowering shrubs, including hydrangea, summersweet, and azalea. Terra-cotta pots planted with herbs (which can be clipped for cooking), gray-leaved licorice plant, million bells, and black-eyed Susan vine provide even more color and textural interest.

To keep a small patio from feeling cramped, while enabling you to comfortably linger over meals, keep furniture to a minimum but don't forgo a generous-sized table and chairs—as long as there's room to circulate. This set, seats six to eight and is made from sustainable teak that's been allowed to weather to a silvery gray, appropriate in the natural setting.



3. Add an ORNAMENTAL BORDER.

A fence along the front of a property is an important design element since it creates a frame in which to garden, provides year-round interest, and offers privacy from the street. This one was designed with an English lattice pattern for a charming cottage look.

Since the site is sloped, the 6- and 8-foot panels had to be stepped, and I was determined that the horizontal members would line up, which took a lot of on-site adjustment. After many hours of shifting and trimming an inch here and there, the crew were ultimately able to save me from my visions of a cheap plaid shirt where the pocket and the pattern don't line up.

The airy squares of the fence provide a two-sided gardening opportunity in a small space, providing a handsome backdrop to a long, blooming perennial border that looks good from every angle. Low-growing plants were placed on the street side, including snow-in-summer, creeping phlox, heuchera, salvia, cranesbill, red valerian, catmint, rose campion, penstemon, spiky-leaved iris, Autumn Joy sedum, low-growing Knockout roses, Japanese painted ferns, Stella d'Oro daylilies, and clematis. Taller ones were planted on the house side, including foxglove, allium, velvety red peonies, false indigo, highly perfumed Casa Blanca lilies, but terrify bush, delphinium, hollyhocks, the fragrant damask rose Celsiana, never-say-die Betty Prior roses, and showy Charles de Mills roses. The fence also hides the unattractive lower limbs of some of the tall flowering shrubs and supports perennials that get top-heavy. It serves as an attractive landscape feature even in winter, when plants are dormant.

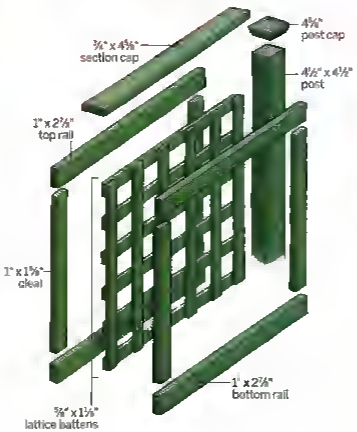
FENCE PANELS

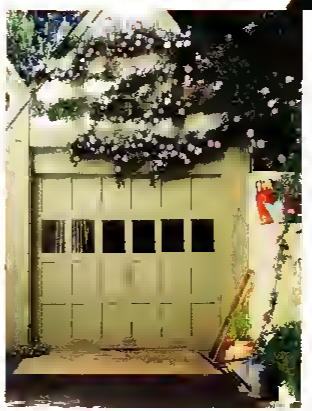
KNOW-HOW

Whether you choose a picket, board, spindle, or lattice style, premade wooden fence panels can be had at many lumberyards and home centers for a reasonable price. But building your own panels from scratch allows you to customize their design and use longer-lasting, premium lumber stock.

Walpole Woodworkers (walpolewoodworkers.com) built the 3½-foot-high northern white cedar fence sections shown here off site, then trucked them to the job for installation. Here's how they're made: For each one, a frame is laid down on the worktable, consisting of a top and bottom rail and two side cleats. Horizontal lattice battens are spaced 3½ inches apart and attached to the side cleats with galvanized nails. Vertical battens are stapled to the horizontal ones with the same spacing; then they're nailed to the top and bottom rails. A second frame is placed on top, sandwiching the lattice, then screwed through the rails and cleats.

On site, each section is screwed into fence posts through the cleats. The rail cap is attached flush to the top rails, nailed at either end and in the middle with two offset nails. Caps are nailed onto posts through each side. Holes are filled (and touched up, if needed) once the fence is complete. —SAL VAGLICA





4. Train climbers UP a wall.

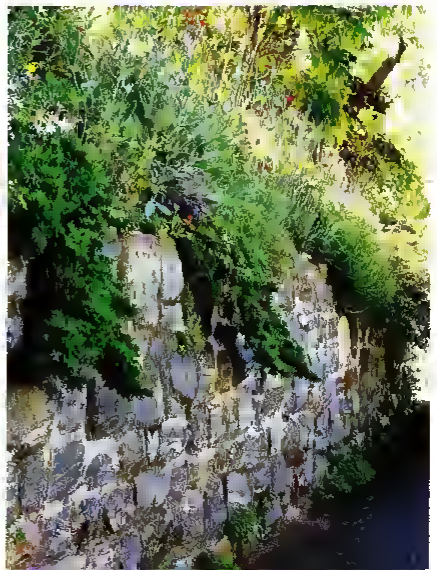
Feeling squeezed for space? Look up. The walls of your house or an outbuilding can present a perfect opportunity to grow a vertical garden of vines or climbers. Here, a prolific rambling May Queen rose is trained across the facade of the garage, whose half-timbered details and door get the same green stain as the garden structures. Since roses don't cling by suckers or twining tendrils, as most vines do, they need to be tied to a supporting structure. In this case, heavy-gauge copper wire was strung through masonry eye screws attached to the building's stucco surface for a sturdy, yet nearly invisible, framework. At night, a sconce with amber glass above the door casts a warm glow. Elsewhere on the property, ready-made cedar trellises are attached to the house to support more climbing roses, as well as clematis vines. Wire climbing supports set into containers allow potted vines to get some height, too.

Virtually no space is overlooked as a gardening opportunity. A yellow-flowering sedum mounds up at the base of the garage. Volunteer flowers grow along the driveway, and small violets and columbine bloom along the base of the retaining wall that borders it.

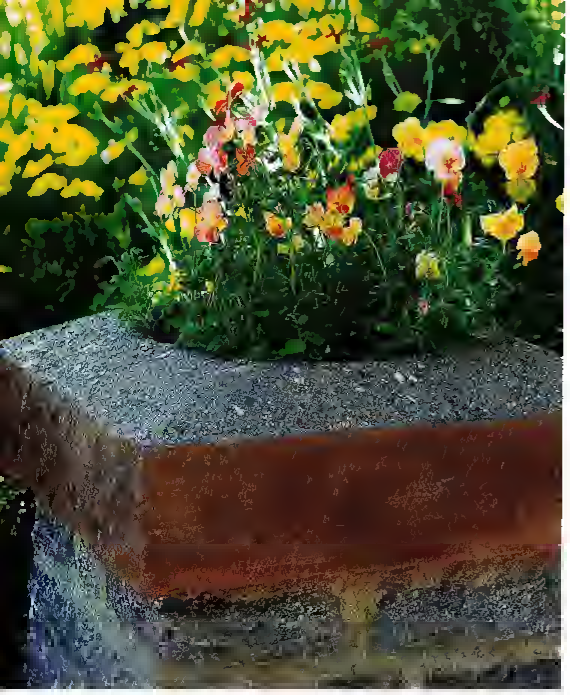
5. Grow trailers DOWN a wall.

Where houses are built along a street that runs uphill, retaining walls are a fact of suburban life. Rather than ignore them, use plants to soften the hard edges of a long run of masonry.

The beauty of a wall planting is that it puts flowers at eye level. And some, like bleeding heart, helleborus, and spiderwort, have pendulous blossoms that are best appreciated when viewed from below. Of course, the area along the top of a wall can be hard to get to. And in this case, it receives unrelenting late-afternoon sun. So it called for plants that thrive on limited care: sedums, catmint, poppy mallow, santolina, Montauk daisy, lavender, pink fairy roses, purple campanula, (far left) evergreen juniper, (near left) and willowleaf cotoneaster, which has small green leaves and brilliant red berries that persist all winter long. Larger plants form a backdrop to the drifts of small flowers in front; these include spring-blooming yellow broom, June-flowering pink rugosa roses, and late-summer large-petaled hibiscus, with mounding ornamental grasses planted in between.



Need ideas for foundation plantings? Go to thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts



6: Put in a STONE PLANTER.

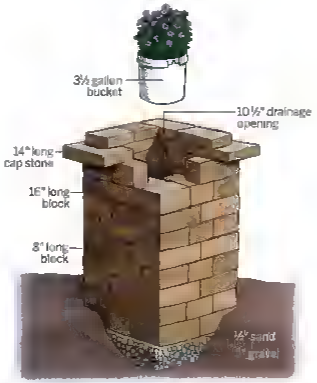
Low pillars are often used to punctuate a driveway entrance or the ends of a wall. Turning the top into a planter is another chance to brighten a site with flowers and foliage. Such a planter may be small, but because it's set up high, it really catches the eye. This stone-and-concrete column, part of our driveway's original design, has a cast-concrete cap with an integral planting bowl about the size of a 14-inch clay pot. And like a clay pot, it needs regular watering to ensure that the plants do not dry out.

Each year we plant the pillar with annuals for lots of color. Cool-weather hardy pansies, which come in a wide range of colors, are put in first in early spring, as soon as they're available. When the weather warms up, they get replaced with whatever looks great on the day we go to the nursery. Last year that meant lime-green sweet potato vine that grows like crazy and drapes down the sides of the planter with large yellow and orange French marigolds planted in the center to add some height. For a lower-maintenance planting where a pillar is situated in full sun, you might consider using drought-tolerant sedums, succulents, or ornamental grasses instead.

PILLAR PLANTER

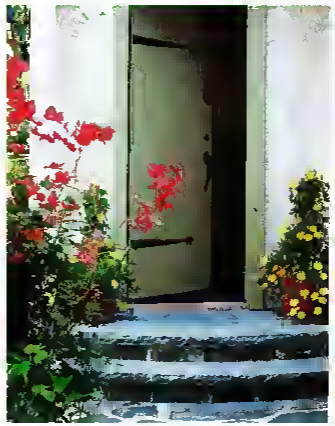
KNOW-HOW

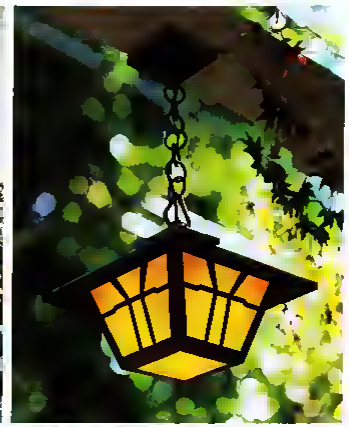
Building a pillar planter using precast concrete retaining wall blocks, which get glued together, is a simple project for almost any homeowner. To show how it can be done, we designed a 32-inch square one with tumbled blocks from Versa-Lok (versa-lok.com). It's just 4 feet high, so no footing or additional reinforcement is necessary, and blocks can be cut as needed with an inexpensive brick hammer. To build it: 1. Excavate a foot of soil, then add 6 inches of tamped crushed stone, top with ½ inch of sand. 2. Lay your first course, alternating 16- and 8-inch-long blocks to create the pattern shown here; level it. 3. Apply concrete adhesive along the tops of the blocks, then start the second course, offsetting joints with large and small blocks as needed. Top with adhesive—and so on, for a total of eight courses. 4. On the ninth row, knock 3 inches off the inside of each 12-inch-deep block to make room for a 3½-gallon plastic bucket to sit on the rim of the void in the column's center. 5. Lay and glue two courses of thinner, 14-inch-long cap stones, cutting 3 inches off the depth of the last course, line up the inside edges of all three top rows for a stepped cap. Drill drainage holes in the bucket; drop it in. Fill with soil and flowers. — MARK POWERS



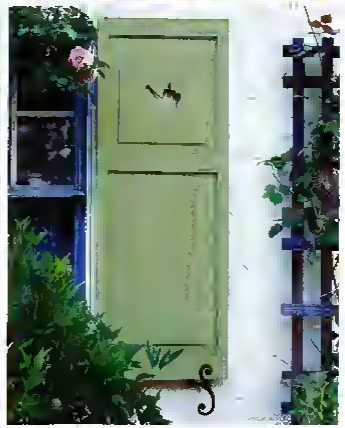
7: Tie the HOUSE into the garden.

Repeating details from the garden on your home's exterior—and vice versa—makes the house an integral part of the landscape. For instance, the black iron hardware used on the entry gate gets repeated on the front door with nonfunctioning strap hinges, a thumb latch, and a ring door knocker (far left). The door itself is painted the same Benjamin Moore Kennebunkport Green as the garden structures. What had been two small steps as wide as the door became a larger bluestone entrance pad with a graceful curved edge. It provides space enough for a pair of tall pots planted with black-eyed Susan vine. To the left, the bright pink petals of a Betty Prior shrub rose literally reach out to greet guests.





Taking their cue from the house's Tudor Revival cottage style, bronze light fixtures with amber glass shades—and warm-colored bulbs—add a honeyed glow in the evening. One with an Arts and Crafts feeling hangs over the garden gate, illuminating the deeply serrated leaves of the nearby Japanese red maple (top right). Another on the side of the house near the patio (bottom left) is framed by a deep-pink climbing Etoile de Hollande hybrid tea rose.



Even the shutters (bottom right) connect with the landscape via a custom cutout of a watering can and the same shade of green as the fence and arbor. Like any wood feature meant to withstand the elements, these should be made of rot-resistant stock such as cedar and stained rather than painted to fade over time rather than peel. The ones here are finished with classic S-shaped shutter dogs in black iron, echoing the other hardware details on the house and garden gate. This one is set off by climbing roses, including a pink flowering Constance Spry that arches over the window and can be seen while sitting inside at the dining room table.

The nearby trellis, a ready-made design from a local nursery, is made of cedar and has been left to go gray, eliminating any maintenance. Tall shrubs sit below the roses, including dwarf cranberry viburnum, which has four-season interest: white flowers in spring, a deeply edged leaf, and red berries in winter. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY, PAGE 112

"we said we wanted a Diamond in the Rough"

What we got was an 1895 Queen Anne with melted wiring and soggy plaster—a home in desperate need of some architectural TLC

BY AMANDA WEKO, HOMEOWNER ◆ PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIC PIASECKI ◆ STYLING BY LAURENT LABORIE

OPPOSITE: The homeowners—Amanda and Matt Weko, shown with daughter Ellie—salvaged the house's cedar siding but had to rebuild the front porch, which was gone. They brightened the whole exterior with historical colors.

We passed on even looking at the house three times before the real estate agent convinced us

ABOVE: Both the entry doors and the stained-glass windows are original to the home; the floor tile is new. RIGHT: This century-old brass doorknob still adorns one of the doors, which is painted red, yellow, and cream, like the rest of the exterior. OPPOSITE: The husband rebuilt the shelf on the living room mantel, which was topped with plywood when the couple moved in. He also copied the mantel's dentil molding when he made new built-in cabinets for the family room.

to check it out. I had just given birth to our daughter Ellie, and my husband, Matt, and I realized we would quickly outgrow our 1,200-square-foot duplex in southern New Jersey. We told the agent to look for a multifamily Victorian that could be converted back to a single-family, "a diamond in the rough." We knew there were a lot of these chopped-up houses out there, and figured it was the only way we'd be able to afford a big old house with character. Little did we know the challenges that lay ahead of us.

Despite being greeted by a barking pit bull frothing at the mouth—and touring the place with him in tow—we immediately fell in love with the house. The 1895 Queen Anne had been split into two units in the 1960s, and while my husband and I, who both have architectural degrees, agreed that it was a cosmetic wreck, it seemed to have good bones. Nothing appeared rotted or on the verge of tumbling down. The HVAC system had recently been replaced, and there was new copper plumbing, along with two new furnaces and water heaters.

Unfortunately, right after we took possession, we found out that things weren't as good as they seemed. An electrical engineer friend of ours came over and took a look at an attic junction box we had uncovered where the home's original knob-and-tube wiring met—it was a melted mess. And some wiring was still hot even though it didn't go anywhere anymore. Plus, a second-floor bathroom was actively leaking into the first floor. We had hoped to live in one unit while working on the other and then flip-flop until the whole place was done, but now it looked like we'd have to demo much of the house. And we'd already sold our previous home.

My parents graciously offered to let us stay with them for as long as we wanted. That lasted six months. We had gone from living in a four-bedroom home of our own to bunking in my sister's high-school bedroom, and Matt was commuting four hours a day to work. After three months of demolition and three more getting a few rooms in decent enough shape to bring our now 1-year-old daughter to live on the site, we moved in, continuing to renovate. On the plus side, Ellie can now sleep through jackhammers, a new roof going up, and floors being sanded.

The first thing we wanted to do was to give the house its soul back. Much of its original character had been stripped away and sold off. Two pieces of uneven, painted plywood were serving as the shelf on the living room mantel, and many of the molding details were gone. While we

never found the architectural plans, we realized that the house held clues to the original layout. It was easy to see where skinny partition walls had been put up from hairline cracks and some investigative knuckle-tapping. Once we removed the awful aqua shag carpet in one of the downstairs bedrooms, we figured out where the original kitchen had been, the built-in cabinets still stood, and we could see the gas and water terminations.

We installed all new windows and either replastered the walls or covered them with wallboard. We did manage to save and refinish most of the yellow pine floors. Damaged by the partition walls, 28 floorboards on the first two floors had to be replaced, so we brought down boards from the third floor to patch those areas. We carpeted the top floor, which now serves as an office, home theater, and playroom.

Restoring the original staircase was one of the more drawn-out jobs. To allow for a private entrance to the second-floor apartment, previous owners had taken out the bottom three steps and shoved them beneath the staircase to make the stairs go straight. Then they cut a second entrance into the front wall. One of the first things we did was close up that wall and retrieve the hidden steps. Matt replicated the landing, railing, and treads out of oak. The job would have taken about a month to do, but since we knew we'd be carrying sinks and toilets and other heavy stuff up and down, we decided to live with plywood treads and rails during construction—which ended up taking two-and-a-half years. It was the first project we started and the last one we finished.

At the time, Matt was working on a job renovating a monastery, and he brought home a lot of materials that would have otherwise ended up on the scrap heap. Among the salvaged jewels was a 10-foot-long, two-basin, stainless-steel pot-washing sink and herringbone-parquet wood flooring, both of which we put in my favorite room of the house: the kitchen. I love to entertain, but I also like to be left alone when I cook, so I designed the space in a circular scheme that allows me to cook for large groups of people efficiently. I splurged on a 48-inch range, stainless-steel backsplash, and vent hood, added lots of open steel shelving, and put two Whirlpool refrigerators beneath butcher block counters.

Believe it or not, my favorite project was getting gray and dusty as I sanded away—by hand—decades of built-up filth from each of the 4-by-12-inch pieces of oak parquet flooring. I must have sat for 300 hours, doing six pieces an hour. Once the tongue-and-groove sections were smooth, we were able to rip out the existing tile and

BELOW: The salvaged 10-foot-long stainless-steel pot washing sink with under-counter storage was free—and provides almost half of the room's 20 linear feet of counter space. BOTTOM: To keep the kitchen open and uncluttered, there are no upper cabinets and two small refrigerators are tucked under the counters.

"We really replaced, repaired, or renovated every single surface of the house."
—AMANDA WEKO, HOMEOWNER

ABOVE: After discovering that the previous owners had removed the last three steps of the original staircase (and shoved them underneath the stairs) the homeowners built new stringers and restored the bottom steps. The husband also created new corbels downstairs where the originals were missing.

What We Did:

Returned a chopped up 1895 Queen Anne to its single-family roots

Remodeling cost: About $100,000

Time frame: 3 years

Where we saved: Using flooring, lights, and a sink salvaged from a monastery for free, as well as buying other reclaimed materials through architectural salvage stores

Where we splurged: The pro-grade stove and other appliances in the kitchen

What we'd do differently: Hire someone else for the exterior paint job, which was a disaster

Biggest challenge: Restoring the original layout of the rooms.

How we solved it: By studying the home and looking for signs where walls were added

LEFT: The salvaged original bottom steps

RIGHT: In the master bedroom, the homeowners refinished the pine floors and repaired the plaster walls; all the windows in the house are new. BELOW: The corbels in the master bedroom were the only original ones left. OPPOSITE: Boards from underneath this carpeted third-floor office helped patch up the floors below.

To learn how to install a handrail, go to thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts

lay down the parquet. It really looks amazing.

About a year after we'd started, the inside was pretty much done, and we were making plans to renovate the drab beige exterior. We had managed to do most of the work with savings, and we didn't want to take on more debt. Then we got a call from someone on behalf of the borough of Collingswood offering us a low-interest loan to continue our restoration work. It was part of a program called Glad To Be Single Again, an initiative seeking to promote the reconversion of more than 500 homes like ours that had been turned into duplexes. We decided the offer was too good to pass up.

Someone mentioned that the home originally had a wraparound porch, so we applied for a variance to rebuild it, working with Three Brothers Building to do the detailed construction and Victoriana East, a local millwork company, to create an appropriate sawn baluster railing. Everybody did such a great job that the new addition fooled a former neighbor who was back for a visit. She couldn't believe it wasn't the original porch.

The loan also allowed us to hire people to replace the worn-out roof and paint the peeling exterior. Rob Miller of RJ Roofing put up simulated slate tiles to replace the existing tan asphalt shingles, which didn't suit the character of the house at all. But even though we followed all the rules for checking out a contractor before hiring him, our painter was a disaster. He slapped patching compound on the original cedar siding and didn't bother to sand it. He started painting while the siding was damp from a rainstorm, so the paint blistered. But the final straw was when he used a sprayer—even after we'd asked him not to—which left a fine yellow mist on the new windows and ruined much of the new roof. We fired him on the spot. When Rob came and saw what the painter had done, he stood in the middle of the street yelling, "I can't believe what he did to my roof! Well, your roof, but it feels like mine with all the work I put into it." He felt so bad for us that he did most of what should have been a very expensive repair job for just the cost of materials.

Unfortunately, we have yet to fully undo the damage. It's three times as expensive to paint now since the shingles have to be stripped. So we've been spending our weekends taking a razor to the windows and stripping, repriming, and brush-painting the worst of the peeling sections. Matt jokes that he'll be painting this house forever.

We came into this renovation with the idea that it would be a great adventure. Now we can't get that people do this over and over. We don't ever want to do it again, which is probably a good thing since we've finally managed to polish up this gem into our dream home. ■

Tell us your story

Did you renovate your house and do most of the work yourself? If so, we'd like to hear about your project. Please send copies of before and after photos, a floor plan (we cannot return any materials), and a brief description of the work you did to:

This Old House/Transformations
1185 Avenue of the Americas, 27th Floor
New York, NY 10036

Or e-mail images and information to
transformations@thisoldhouse.com

You'll receive a payment of $250 if your home is featured.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY PAGE 112

As escutcheon plates travel beneath the auto-polisher, two whirling fabric wheels burnish the brass pieces to a lustrous shine. Polishing turns the metal so hot that workers must wear thick gloves to protect their hands.

PHOTO (DOORKNOB): EFF HARRIS

HANDS-ON HARDWARE

COMBINE TRADITION WITH TECHNOLOGY AND WHAT DO YOU GET? BRASS BEAUTIES THAT STAND THE TEST OF TIME

Wham! Every 8 seconds or so—***wham!***—a 200-ton blow from a hydraulic forge—***wham!***—slams down on a hunk of hot brass—***wham!***—beating the metal into a rough but recognizable doorknob.

The rhythm of the forge, the hum of the polishing wheel, the clank of heavy machinery, these are the sounds of Baldwin Hardware's manufacturing plant in Reading, Pennsylvania. For more than 50 years, amid this gritty vestige of America's industrial heyday, artisans have been churning out a stunning array of shining adornments for our doors, kitchens, and bathrooms. At last count, you could choose from 60,000 combinations of styles and finishes.

The options in the hardware market can be overwhelming, but the best stuff is easy to identify. Made of solid brass, it's heat-forged, hand-polished, then plated or protected with a coat of hard-wearing lacquer. At Baldwin, the old machinery still does the heavy work of transforming raw metal into knobs, levers, and escutcheon plates. But the company has paired 19th-century technology with cutting-edge systems: computer-controlled vacuum chambers and plasma jets that encase plated metal in a bulletproof finish.

For all its advantages, this high-tech finishing method is notoriously finicky. The least little nick or imperfection ruins the surface. So, ironically, this modern advancement would not be possible without the skilled hands and discerning eyes of the guys who operate those "iron-age" forges, grinding belts, and polishing wheels. Here, where an apprenticeship on one machine can take up to a year, the tradition of craftsmanship—and the commitment to quality—still runs deep. Join us for a look at what it takes to make high-end hardware, and why it's worth the cost.

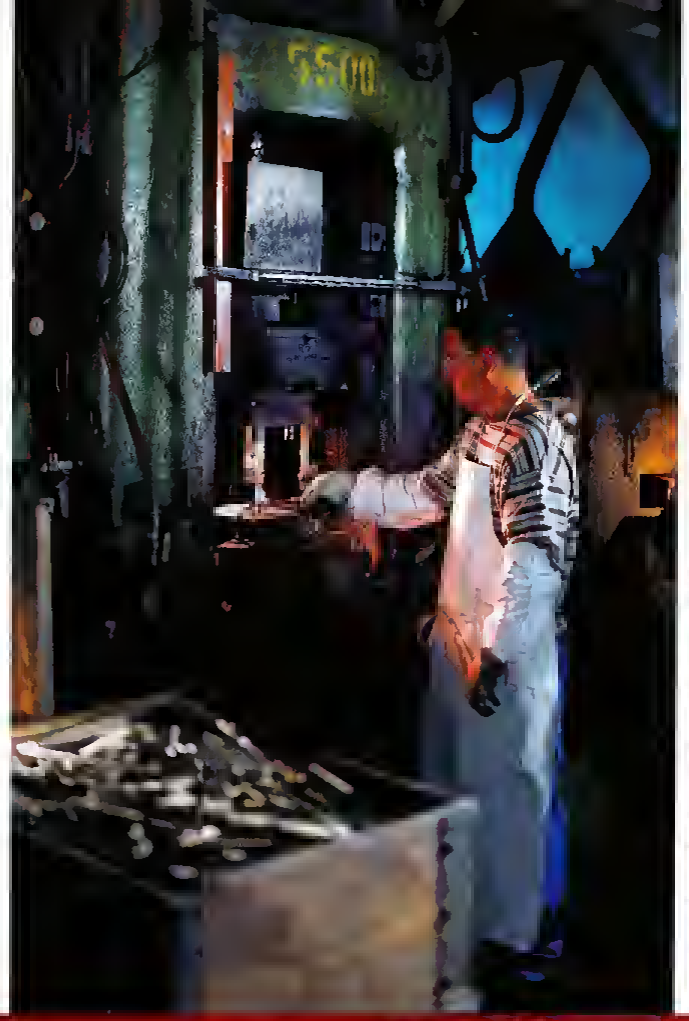
— By Thomas Baker | Photographs by Pascal Blanchet —

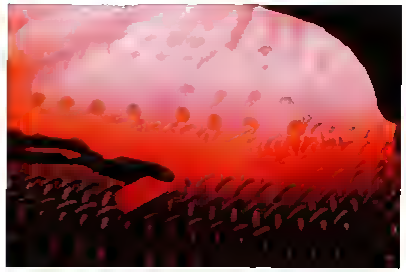
ELEMENTS OF QUALITY

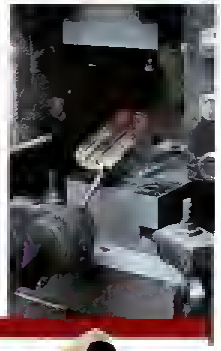
The best hardware has certain characteristics in common. Here's what to look for when you want high-performance products that will last for generations.

Fine Metal

Regardless of its final shape, most high-quality hardware starts out as a simple bar of solid brass. Here, rack upon rack of raw 12-foot-long bar stock is sorted by diameter (⅜ to 2½ inches). The mix of metals in these bars—a forging alloy made of approximately 6 parts copper, 4 parts zinc, and trace amounts of lead—is standard fare for brass hardware. The inventory doesn't sit around long. In a typical week, Baldwin draws (and replenishes) 100,000 pounds of brass to feed its forges and other machinery.







Hot Forging

As any Bronze Age blacksmith could tell you, forging—pounding hot metal into shape—makes for stronger, heavier products than you get by casting, simply pouring liquid metal into a mold. But casting is relatively easy to do, while forging requires complicated, dangerous machinery, expert die makers, and dedicated operators focused on doing quality work. First, the brass bar is cut to length, and this piece, called a billet, is heated in a furnace to a toasty 1,300 degrees (TOP). Then the forge operator grabs the glowing billet in his tongs and places it on the die—the hunk of graphite-lubricated steel that gives the brass its shape (MIDDLE and LEFT). He pushes a button, and the forge drops on the billet—*wham!*—hitting it with a force of up to 200 tons. This flattened piece will become an escutcheon plate (BOTTOM).

BIRTH of a DOORKNOB

FROM RAW BAR TO POLISHED KNOB IN FIVE NOT SO SIMPLE STEPS

CUT
A billet of brass is cut from bar stock at the correct diameter.

FORGED
The knob's rough shape emerges after the heated billet is pounded into the die.

TRIMMED
A stamping press takes off the thin skirt of metal flashing made by the forge.

GROUND
A kiss from an abrasive grinding belt strips off forge oxidation and reveals the knob's golden heart.

POLISHED
Polishing wheels smooth away the grinding marks and ready the knob for its final finish.

FINISHING SCHOOL

Polished brass can be given a dazzling array of finishes: everything from a dark bronze to a silvery nickel, or left to show off its own golden shine.

1 | LACQUERED
Polished brass is the interior finish that's most popular and easiest to produce. But left exposed to the chemicals in the air and on our skin, brass will slowly lose its shine and oxidize, turning brown or verdigris. The simplest way to halt that process is to give it a coat of clear lacquer, which stands up fairly well to the elements. The coating will eventually chip or wear away, leaving the metal to continue its natural tendency to tarnish. At that point, the only way to keep it looking bright is to remove the finish and polish the metal regularly or recoat the polished piece with more lacquer.

2 | PLATED
Tougher than lacquer, plating keeps oxidation at bay with a veneer of nonferrous metal such as chrome, nickel, or copper. The thicker the plating, the better the protection, but thickness is impossible for a consumer to judge. That's where the reputation of the hardware maker comes to bear. Baldwin, for instance, may dip a piece of hardware 10 to 30 times to get the desired level of durability and shine. So-called living finishes, such as the Venetian bronze shown here, are copper-based platings that change over time and show the subtle effects of being touched by human hands.

3 | PLATED WITH PVD
Creating a finish that doesn't tarnish or wear off has long been the Holy Grail of hardware (and faucet makers). Today they may have found a way to get it: physical vapor deposition, or PVD. Three carefully controlled platings of nickel and tin-nickel are followed by a stint in a vacuum chamber where zirconium nitride, heated to form a vapor, is shot at whirling racks of hardware. The resulting metal coating—a molecule-thin layer only 12 millionths of an inch thick—looks just like nickel or polished brass but is immune to wear and tarnish.

See how master carpenter Norm Abram installs door hardware: thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts

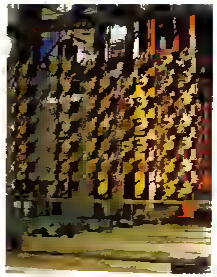
PHOTOS: (BROM HANBLESTED) MERRISON

Polishing

A thorough polishing eliminates the tarnish, nicks, and scratches that could compromise the final finish. At Baldwin, the work is done in two steps, using fast-spinning fabric wheels impregnated with mild abrasives. The first "compounding" wipes away the rough scratches left by grinding off oxidation from the forge. The second step uses jeweler's rouge, which is about as abrasive as toothpaste, to bring out the metal's shine. Some pieces can be auto-polished; others, like these doorknob roses (ABOVE), need to be buffed by hand. The task requires a skilled touch and sharp eyes; it takes over a year of practice to master the art of putting on shine without losing detail.

Plating

A brightly polished piece of brass may get little more than a coat of clear lacquer to preserve its shine, but for greater protection against the tarnishing effect of wear and weather, the metal must be plated. The process involves dipping rackfuls of pristine brass hardware into a series of giant tanks (LEFT). The first one is filled with degreaser solvent; others contain dissolved minerals such as nickel or chrome. As the rack is lowered into its metallic bath, the pieces are given a slight negative electrical charge to encourage the positively charged metal ions to bond to the brass.



While traditional plating stops brass from corroding, it also hides its golden sheen. That changed in 1992, when Baldwin introduced a high-tech plating process called physical vapor deposition. Hardware that has been treated with PVD (BELOW) is guaranteed to stay looking like new for as long as you own your home. For more on how the PVD process works, see "Finishing School," opposite.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY PAGE 112

Back to Nature

The greenest approach to landscaping returns a yard to its roots, cutting down on water and chemical dependency and attracting local wildlife

BY JEANNE HUBER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY KENNY BRAUN

MICHAEL KLUG AND MICHELE GRIESHABER WANTED TO LIVE IN A GREEN HOUSE, a home that would have as little impact on the planet as possible. Sensitive to the effect their consumption of natural resources has on the environment, they worked with a green architect, hired a green builder, and asked *This Old House* TV to help them remodel their 1926 Craftsman bungalow using recycled materials, energy saving systems, and eco-friendly building methods. But their green ethos didn't stop at the four walls of their house.

This being Austin, Texas, the weather is temperate enough for residents to enjoy the outdoors most of the year. So the couple applied their green thinking outside the house as well, turning their generic suburban yard into a sustainable landscape.

Rather than being designed primarily for show, a sustainable landscape is more about function, providing food and cover for birds and butterflies, protecting water resources, and reconnecting city dwellers with the natural world. The plants are suited to the climate and soil, so they require less care to thrive, and hardscaping materials impact the ecosystem as little as possible.

Roger Cook, *This Old House* landscape contractor, says homeowners are becoming more interested in eco-friendly yards. "Everyone is aware of the effects of fertilizer and pesticides and where they go when they leave the lawn," he says. "People question plant choices, looking for native alternatives, and ask, 'How can I maintain my yard organically?'"

To reimagine their small lot, Michael and Michele hired local landscape designer J. Adams Kirkpatrick. Out went problem plants, and in came native species and efficient drip irrigation. The lawn shrank, impervious paving made way for gravel that lets rain seep through, and a new rainwater harvesting system went in to free the landscape from its dependence on city water. The design was so eco-friendly, in fact, it garnered the team a Green Garden award from the City of Austin.

What the couple did is actually quite simple—doable for any homeowner hoping to reduce the negative effect their yard might have on the environment. Here are five keys to their plot's sustainability.

The yard at *This Old House* TV's Austin project has many green elements. *TOH* landscape contractor Roger Cook discusses the native plants with landscape designer Adams Kirkpatrick (left), while local landscape contractor Russell Womack lays low-maintenance turf, a crew member carries locally quarried limestone, and irrigation specialist Chris Lupton installs drip hose—fed from collected rainwater—in a plant bed.

The skinny twig of a tree in the center is a Texas redbud discovered after overgrown nonnative plants were pulled out. It should flourish surrounded by new native plantings.

Planting What Grows Naturally

Shrubs, perennials, grasses and other plants that are native to a particular region are naturally adapted to the climate and soil so they require less prep and upkeep. They are also in sync with local wildlife, so one may bloom just as migrating hummingbirds arrive and need nectar while another opens when a specific native bee is most active.

Michael and Michele's old yard already had a handful of natives, including a couple of hollies (*Ilex vomitoria* and *I. opaca*), Texas wisteria (*Wisteria frutescens*), and a pecan tree (*Carya illinoensis*). Kirkpatrick added many more, including American beautyberry (*Callicarpa Americana*), which has neon-bright violet berries that birds love, and Texas betony (*Stachys coccinea*), which attracts hummingbirds.

Just as important as planting native species is removing nonnatives that can become invasive. When a plant adapted to one environment is put in another, there's always a gamble that it might wind up growing unchecked because there aren't the limiting factors—temperature highs and lows, animals that feed on the plant—that exist in the old environment. Michael and Michele's old landscape, for instance, included waxleaf privet (*Ligustrum japonicum*), which gardening books generally describe as suitable for topiary or bonsai. But in Austin, it grows to tree size and drops limbs. Birds have carried the seeds to streams, where it's shading out native vegetation. Sadly, the fruit doesn't even give the birds the nutrients they need. "We now have acres of silent forest because invasive plants nudged out the species that sustained the birds," Kirkpatrick says.

He ripped out both waxleaf privets in the yard and replaced one with a loquat tree. Near the other, he found a Texas redbud growing in the same area. Though it's barely a stick, he expects it to fill out now that the bully plant is gone. (Kirkpatrick did include some nonnatives on his plant list because they were proven to be tame species that had adapted to the local climate but wouldn't spread aggressively.)

Adding plants that provide food to birds and animals is another way to keep the local ecosystem in balance. So Kirkpatrick also included dwarf Barbados cherry (*Malpighia glabra*), whose berries feed birds; southern wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*) and inland sea oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*), with seeds that mice and rabbits like to eat; and purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), which attracts butterflies.

A landscape crew member rakes pine-straw mulch over the plant beds. The native material keeps soil moist, shades out weed seeds, and nourishes plants as it breaks down.

2 Feeding the Earth

Trying to garden in poor soil is a never-ending battle, the antithesis of what a sustainable landscape should be. Rich soil makes for healthy plants, including turf, which means fewer diseases and pests and consequently less need for chemical intervention. Michael and Michele's native soil is "black gumbo," an elastic clay that swells in the rain and shrinks during dry spells. But many plants thrive in it provided enough organic material is mixed in so it drains.

Amending the soil is particularly important after construction, notes Roger. "Plants can't grow in all the junk that's left behind," he says. "You have to till compacted areas and add organic material to get the soil back into shape."

Mulch and compost can play a major role in protecting the earth. By shading the soil, mulch keeps moisture from evaporating and deters weed seeds from sprouting. In the couple's yard, Kirkpatrick opted to use pine-straw mulch, which feeds plants with nutrients as it breaks down.

In the vegetable garden, he built two tall compost cones out of metal stakes wrapped with wire. Fruit and vegetable scraps and leafy yard waste go in at the top; nutrient-rich compost "tea" seeps out into the garden underneath—or the couple can take compost from the bottom to spread in the rest of the yard. It's a tidy approach he hopes will encourage the couple to keep up the organic recycling.

3 Minimizing the Lawn

Lawns warrant special attention in a sustainable landscape because they tend to demand more water, fertilizer and care than other planted areas and because they don't offer much in the way of wildlife habitat. Yet many people still want a green lawn, whether as open space or for recreation. Michael and Michele didn't want to eliminate theirs entirely, but they did make it smaller to serve almost as a walkway with deep planting beds around the edges.

Besides amending the soil with compost, there are four keys to making a lawn as sustainable as possible: watering efficiently, mowing appropriately, using only slow-release organic fertilizers and planting the right variety of turf grass. In Austin's hot climate, buffalograss is the most sustainable option; it needs watering just once a month and mowing only once or twice a year. But it doesn't stand up to foot traffic, and it can take up to two years to fill out and mature. So Kirkpatrick recommended St. Augustine grass, which is also a good choice for their shady site. The couple plans to mow it high and leave the clippings on the lawn to encourage deep root growth, which helps keep the soil porous.

David Krug, Michael's son, checks out the St. Augustine sod on a small patch of the front yard. He and his brother, Sam, are avid gardeners.

The rainwater collection tank—taller than Blake West of Innovative Water Solutions—holds 1,200 gallons of gutter runoff.

Managing Water Use

In most gardens, rain coming off the roof can be a problem, damaging plants and overwhelming storm drains. But at Michael and Michele's, it's a resource. Austin gets 32 inches of rain in an average year—nearly as much as Seattle—but it comes in spurts between long, hot, dry periods. As a result, most plants, other than true natives, need irrigation. That often means using municipal water.

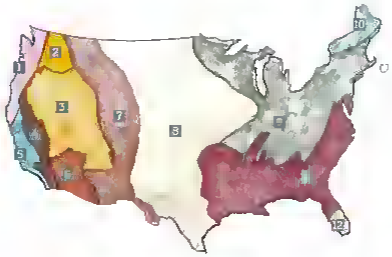
To reduce that dependency, the couple installed a rainwater collection system with help from Innovative Water Solutions. Like the rain barrels that many homeowners use, their system collects gutter water. But while typical rain barrels hold 50 to 80 gallons, Michael and Michele's epoxy-coated galvanized cistern, which sits aboveground, holds 1,200 gallons and feeds most of the irrigation. The capacity will depend on how full the tank is at the beginning of each storm, but it has the potential to collect nearly 30,000 gallons in a year.

Water is drawn through a floating filter 8 inches below the surface, rather than from the bottom of the tank where debris collects. The tank is also plumbed for city water so that the irrigation system will work when the tank is empty. And there is a pump to boost the water pressure up to the 40 psi needed.

To make every drop count, Michael and Michele are using drip irrigation, which delivers moisture to roots in just the quantity that each plant needs. Sprinklers still feed the lawn, but everything else now gets water through a combination of drip hose and 6-inch-tall emitters that are fed by underground tubing. The emitters deliver a precise amount of water to specific plants—1 gallon per hour for one, maybe 3 gallons for another. And an electronic control allows the couple to adjust the system to suit the weather.

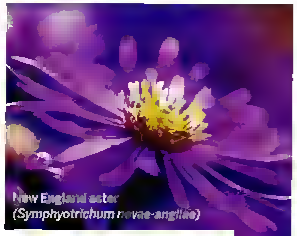
GOING NATIVE

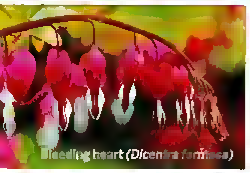
Native plants don't know anything about state lines—they grow in distinct communities based on climate, as shown on this map of the continental U.S. However, within each zone there are numerous microclimates as well—for example, the central prairies and plains province includes shortgrass prairie in the drier west and tallgrass prairie in the moister east. So when making selections from this plant list, determine your zone, then select plants from your zone that are adapted to drier conditions for the hottest part of your garden and that need more water for the areas where the soil naturally stays moist.



■ GRASS ■ SHRUB ■ WILDFLOWER ■ CACTUS ■ FERN

SUN ○ PART SUN ◐ SHADE ● DRY SOIL 💧 MOIST SOIL 💧💧 WET SOIL 💧💧💧


New England aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)


Bleeding heart (*Dicentra formosa*)

Oakleaf sumac (*Rhus trilobata*)

Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)

River oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*)

1 NORTH PACIFIC COASTAL / CASCADE MTN FORESTS

INDIAN PLUM (*Oemleria cerasiformis*) Delicate, very early white flowers. Fruit draws birds. To 15 ft. ○ ● 💧–💧💧

RED OSIER DOGWOOD (*Cornus stolonifera* or *sericea*) Winter twig color. Blue berries draw birds. To 15 ft. ○ ◐ 💧–💧💧💧

WESTERN COLUMBINE (*Aquilegia formosa*) Distinctive red and yellow flowers draw hummingbirds. To 3 ft. ○ ◐ ● 💧💧

BLEEDING HEART (*Dicentra formosa*) Pink, heart-shaped flowers appear in spring. Plants spread into a carpet. To 18 in. ◐ ● 💧

PIGGYBACK PLANT (*Tolmiea menziesii*) New leaves grow over old. To 1 ft. ● 💧💧

DEER FERN (*Blechnum spicant*) Tidy with upright fronds. Evergreen. To 2½ ft. ○–● 💧–💧💧

MAIDENHAIR FERN (*Adiantum pedatum* or *aleuticum*) Lacy fronds. Deciduous. To 2½ ft. ● 💧💧

2 PINE HOUSE

IDAHO FESCUE (*Festuca idahoensis*) Deep green or blue-green. Feathery seed heads. To 2 ft. ○ ◐ 💧💧

SERVICEBERRY (*Amelanchier canadensis*) Showy white flowers. Purple fruit draws birds. To 20 ft. ○–◐ 💧💧

NOOTKA ROSE (*Rosa nutkana*) Pink flowers up to 2 in. wide. To 3 ft. ○ 💧

BLACK HAWTHORN (*Crataegus douglasii*) Birds nest in tangled, thorny branches. To 15 ft. ○ ● 💧💧

WESTERN YARROW (*Achillea millefolium*) Aromatic white flowers. To 3 ft. ○–◐ 💧💧

BLANKETFLOWER (*Gaillardia aristata*) Red and yellow daisylike flowers spring to fall. To 2 ft. ○ 💧💧

PRAIRIE SMOKE (*Geum triflorum*) Rose flowers and feathery pink seed heads. To 8 in. ○ 💧

3 GREAT BASIN DESERT

BLUE GRAMA (*Bouteloua gracilis*) Gray-green leaves form clumps. To 1 ft. ○ 💧

OAKLEAF SUMAC (*Rhus trilobata*) Showy fall foliage. Orange-red fruit draws birds. To 6 ft. ○–◐ 💧

APACHE PLUME (*Fallugia paradoxa*) White flowers resemble wild roses. Plumelike seed heads. To 6 ft. ○ 💧

FRAGRANT EVENING PRIMROSE (*Oenothera caespitosa*) Night blooms scent the air. To 6 in. ○ 💧

STICKY PURPLE GERANIUM (*Geranium viscosissimum*) Sticky hairs on leaves. Pink to purple flowers. To 3 ft. ○–◐ 💧💧

DWARF YUCCA (*Yucca harrimaniae*) Bell-shaped flowers. To 2 ft. ○ 💧

4 SIERRAN FOOTHILLS/ALPINE VEGETATION

CALIFORNIA FESCUE (*Festuca californica*) Cool-season grass forms evergreen clumps. To 2½ ft. ○–◐ 💧💧

CALIFORNIA REDBUD (*Cercis occidentalis*) Magenta flowers, then heart-shaped leaves. Bean-like seed pods in winter. To 15 ft. ○ 💧

DESERT PEACH (*Prunus andersonii*) Pink flowers in spring develop into brownish fruit. To 6 ft. ○ 💧

BIG BASIN SAGEBRUSH (*Artemisia tridentata*) Bluish gray foliage. To 6 ft. ○ 💧

SAGEBRUSH PENSTEMON (*Penstemon speciosus*) Bright blue flowers and gray-green leaves; attracts butterflies. To 30 in. ○ 💧

MOUNTAIN LARKSPUR (*Delphinium glaucum*) Blue violet flowers. To 18 in. ◐–● 💧💧

PINK ALUMROOT (*Heuchera rubescens*) Sprays of pink flowers and low mound of leaves. To 3 in. ◐–● 💧💧

5 CALIFORNIA GRASSLANDS, CHAPARRAL, AND WOODLAND

DEER GRASS (*Muhlenbergia rigens*) Showy seeds. To 4½ ft. ○ ● 💧

WIRE GRASS (*Juncus patens*) Dark evergreen rush good for stabilizing soil. To 3 ft. ◐–● 💧💧

RUSH ANEMONE (*Carpenteria californica*) Dark green leaves and scented white flowers. To 8 ft. ○–● 💧💧

CALIFORNIA FUCHSIA (*Zauschneria californica*) Late summer and fall orange-red flowers attract hummingbirds. To 2½ ft. ○–◐ 💧

ELEGANT MADIA (*Madia elegans*) Prolific yellow flowers from mid to late summer. To 4 ft. ○–◐ 💧

SCARLET MONKEY FLOWER (*Mimulus cardinalis*) Tubular red flowers for hummingbirds. To 2½ ft. ○–◐ 💧💧

CHALK DUDLEYA (*Dudleya pulverulenta*) Tall flower stalks; good for rock gardens. To 12 in. ◐ 💧

6 MOJAVE AND SONORAN DESERTS

QUAIL BUSH (*Atriplex lentiformis*) Aka salt bush—stores salt in leaves, so takes in more water. To 8 ft. ○ 💧

OCOTILLO (*Fouquieria splendens*) Looks dead, then bursts into color after rain. To 10 ft. ○ 💧

DESERT MARIGOLD (*Baileya multiradiata*) Yellow flowers; orange centers; early spring to summer. To 2 ft. ○ 💧

BLACKFOOT DAISY (*Melampodium leucanthum*) White flowers with yellow centers. To 12 in. ○–◐ 💧

SAGUARO (*Carnegiea gigantea*) Iconic Western cactus with upward curving arms. To 25 ft. or more. ○ 💧

HEDGEHOG CACTUS (*Echinocereus engelmannii*) Brilliant pink flowers in spring; yellow fruit. To 1 ft. ○ 💧

BANANA YUCCA (*Yucca baccata*) Bell-shaped flowers above long, slender leaves. Edible fruit. To 6 ft. ○–◐ 💧

7 ROCKY MTN FORESTS/ALPINE VEGETATION

TUFTED HAIRGRASS (*Deschampsia cespitosa*) Clumping. To 3 ft. ○ 💧💧

GOLDEN CURRANT (*Ribes aureum*) Flower show resembles forsythia. Edible berries. To 10 ft. ○–◐ 💧–💧

WESTERN MOUNTAIN ASH (*Sorbus scopulina*) Bright orange fruit attracts birds. To 12 ft. ○–◐ 💧💧

RED ELDERBERRY (*Sambucus racemosa*) Edible red fruit. To 18 ft. ○–◐ 💧💧

COLORADO COLUMBINE (*Aquilegia caerulea*) Blue and white flowers. To 2 ft. ○–● 💧💧

ROCKY MOUNTAIN IRIS (*Iris missouriensis*) Purple flowers. To 1 ft. ○–◐ 💧💧

FRINGED SAGE (*Artemisia frigida*) Fragrant, silver-gray leaves with small, yellow flowers. To 8 in. ○–◐ 💧

8 CENTRAL PRAIRIES AND PLAINS

BIG BLUESTEM (*Andropogon gerardii*) Showy in summer and fall. To 3 ft. ○ 💧

INDIAN GRASS (*Sorghastrum nutans*) Rust color seed heads. To 4 ft. ○ 💧💧

BUTTERFLY WEED (*Asclepias tuberosa*) Orange-red flowers attract butterflies. To 2 ft. ○ 💧

LARGE-FLOWERED BEARDTONGUE (*Penstemon grandiflorus*) Pink to purple flowers in early summer. To 3 ft. ○ 💧

HOARY PUCCOON (*Lithospermum canescens*) White hairs on leaves. Yellow flowers. To 1 ft. ○ 💧💧

AROMATIC ASTER (*Aster oblongifolius*) Blue flowers in fall. To 3 ft. ○ 💧💧

9 EASTERN DECIDUOUS FORESTS

BOTTLEBRUSH GRASS (*Hystrix patula*) Seed heads look like stiff, bottle brushes. To 5 ft. ◐ 💧💧

EASTERN REDBUD (*Cercis canadensis*) Pink blooms on bare stem, then heart-shaped leaves. To 25 ft. ● 💧

WITCH HAZEL (*Hamamelis virginiana*) Blooms in late winter. Aromatic. To 20 ft. ○–◐ 💧💧

MOUNTAIN LAUREL (*Kalmia latifolia*) Blooms in early summer. Evergreen. To 10 ft. ◐–● 💧–💧💧

NEW ENGLAND ASTER (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*) Purple fall flower with yellow center. To 5 ft. ○–◐ 💧💧

WILD BLUE PHLOX (*Phlox divaricata*) Fragrant spring blooms. To 1 ft. ◐–● 💧💧

BLUE BEAD LILY (*Clintonia borealis*) Bell-shaped flowers develop into shiny blue berries. To 1 ft. ● 💧💧

10 BOREAL FORESTS

HIGHBUSH CRANBERRY (*Viburnum opulus* var. *americanum*). White flowers, then edible red fruit. To 12 ft. ○–◐ 💧💧

CANADIAN YEW (*Taxus canadensis*) Evergreen provides good cover for birds. To 5 ft. ◐ ● 💧💧

MARSH MARIGOLD (*Caltha palustris*) Showy yellow early spring flowers. To 12 in. ○–◐ 💧💧–💧💧💧

SOLOMON'S SEAL (*Polygonatum pubescens*) Arching stemmed lily with bell flowers. To 12 in. ◐–● 💧💧

BUNCHBERRY (*Cornus canadensis*) Related to dogwood, but groundcover height. To 6 in. ◐–● 💧💧

MARGINAL WOOD FERN (*Dryopteris marginalis*) Blue-green fronds. To 24 in. ◐–● 💧–💧💧

11 COASTAL PLAIN FORESTS

RIVER OATS (*Chasmanthium latifolium*) Arching stems hold dangling seed heads. To 5 ft. ○–◐ 💧💧

OAKLEAF HYDRANGEA (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) White to rose blossoms in summer. Fall color. To 12 ft. ◐ 💧–💧💧

SOUTHERN WAX MYRTLE (*Myrica cerifera*) Gray-green to yellow-green foliage. To 10 ft. ◐–● 💧💧

SWEET MOUNTAIN AZALEA (*Rhododendron canescens*) Pink or purple flower. To 15 ft. ◐ ●💧💧 💧💧💧

EASTERN PURPLE CONEFLOWER (*Echinacea purpurea*) Pink or purple summer flowers. To 4 ft. ○ 💧💧

EASTERN BLUESTAR (*Amsonia tabernaemontana*) Blue star-shaped spring flowers attract mourning cloak butterflies. To 3 ft. ○ ◐ 💧💧💧

12 TROPICAL

LIMBER CAPER (*Capparis flexuosa*) Fragrant, spidery flowers and beanlike seed pods. To 25 ft. ○–● 💧💧

BEACH SUNFLOWER (*Helianthus debilis*) Draws butterflies to yellow sunflowers up to 3 inches wide. To 4 ft. ○ 💧💧

PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) CAROL SHARP/FLOWERPHOTOS.COM; MARK TURNER; CAROL SHARP/FLOWERPHOTOS.COM; JOANNE GREY; JONATHAN BLAIR/EXPLOREPARKS.COM. MAP: COURTESY OF JANET MARINELLI

and more native plant listings thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts

5 Using Sustainable Hardscaping

Before subdivisions blanketed the land, rainwater fell on meadows and forests and gradually percolated into the soil. Some worked its way into streams, while the rest pooled in underground aquifers, which today supply the wells on which many communities depend. Sustainable landscapes attempt to preserve what's left of this natural water cycle by keeping impervious paving to a minimum. This allows more rainwater to soak into the soil rather than draining off quickly.

Michael and Michele's old backyard included a concrete walkway. Now that's gone, replaced by pea gravel. The path is lined with blocks of limestone, which is quarried locally—a "green" plus because it cuts down on fuel needed for transportation. Kirkpatrick also recycled chunks of the old concrete, setting them as stepping stones down the middle of the path so Michele can take kitchen scraps to the compost area in her bare feet.

In the side yards, paths are "paved" with pine straw collected from woods near Austin—the same material used to mulch the plant beds. Up against the limestone and juxtaposed with the locally adapted plants, the straw adds to the natural appearance of this deceptively well-planned landscape. With as little maintenance as possible, this yard will function the way the landscape in Austin would without the presence of people—just the low-impact plan Michele and Michael were going for. ■

ABOVE: In the backyard, the area around the garage (right) is "paved" with pea gravel, which allows water to drain back into the soil. Unlike the concrete slab that was there before, a square cut from the slab stands on edge, waiting to be recycled as a stepping stone in the gravel.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY PAGE 112

curb appeal

Get the best-looking house on the block—and ratchet up its value, too—with smart exterior upgrades. Read on to see how BY AMY R. HUGHES

WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE FRONT OF YOUR HOUSE, does your heart swell...or sink? How about when you gaze over at the Joneses' next door. Is it pride or envy that you feel? If you picked the latter in either instance, your place is ripe for an exterior makeover.

Improvements such as adding a porch where only a stoop existed or swapping unruly shrubs for tidy foundation plantings will not only make you happier but will add to your house's "curb appeal"—Realtor speak for how eye-catching it looks from the street. And that can translate into a substantial increase in your property value. "While beauty is more subjective than square footage," says real estate broker Betty Seay of Bardstown, Kentucky, "a home's curb appeal makes a big difference in the price you can get for it." In a tepid real estate market, a facade face-lift can be even more important by coaxing prospective buyers in the door.

To demonstrate how effective image-boosting renovations can be, *This Old House* assembled a portfolio of befores and afters located around the country and asked local real estate professionals to ballpark the value added to the house in each case—that is, how much more it would be worth if it went on the market. The results? Even small upgrades can yield substantial dividends.

Add a Fetching Front Porch

The entry—and what surrounds it—are key to making a home welcoming. So the "Grey Poupon" yellow aluminum siding and tiny off-kilter portico on this Clarendon Hills, Illinois, house had to go. In fact, such "updating" had left the 1909 four square looking like a shell of its former self. Relying on a vintage photograph, the homeowner set about restoring the facade's original charm. Architect David Raino-Ogden drafted the plan for the facade, and a landscape-design course helped the homeowner devise her own plant and hardscape scheme.

Project Particulars >

Porch An airy pergola runs almost the length of the facade, adding square footage and symmetry.

Entry Shifting the opening toward the center and adding a wider door with sidelights make the front more proportional and inviting.

Siding and windows Varying the type, shade, and direction of the new taupe-colored cedar siding adds visual interest. The vertical boards on top also complement the muntins in the new historically accurate windows.

Landscape and lighting A stone wall framed by lush greenery creates a terraced front garden and corrects what had been an awkwardly sloping lawn. Prairie-style lanterns brighten the front walk and portico.

Value Added 25%

Use Flowers to Focus Attention

Few things make a worse first impression than an unkempt front yard. In fact, the total absence of a landscape scheme left the facade of this Tudor-style cottage in San Francisco's East Bay area looking flat and uninviting. "We wanted to introduce the entry by directing traffic up an allée of roses," says Patricia Wagner, who designed the new front yard.

Project Particulars >

Flowers Rows of purple nemesia and taller rose standards lining either side of the front walk add depth to the landscaping and forge a path to the door.

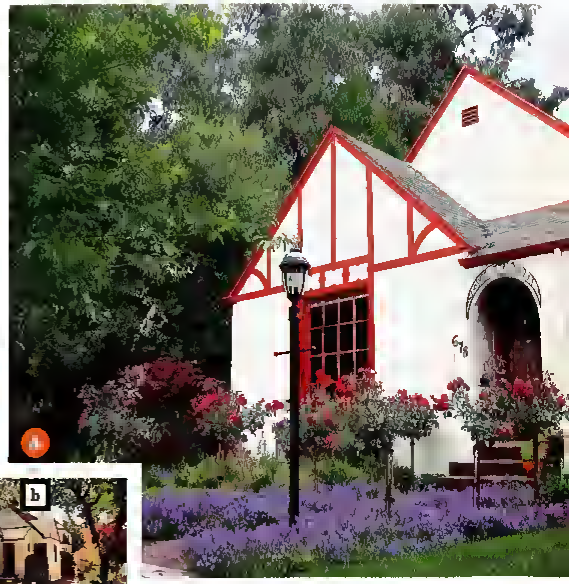
Trees A Japanese maple placed off to one side of the house and two steps back from the facade softens the edge of the property and makes the lawn appear larger.

Entry Creating an arch where a squared-off door recess stood makes for a more graceful entry.

Lighting Swapping an exterior wall sconce for a hanging lantern in the outside vestibule brightens what had been a dark cavern and spotlights one of the home's best attributes: its original Tudor-style door.

Details Black iron for the lamppost, house numbers, and the filigreed arch decoration above the doorway unifies the exterior details.

Value Added 15%



Step-by-step instructions for sprucing up your entry with paint, trim, and hardware: thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts

Replace Windows & Doors

In addition to defining a home's architectural style on the outside, distinguished windows and doors hint at hospitable spaces inside. So after purchasing this forlorn-looking 1904 Colonial Revival in Bardstown, Kentucky, designer-builder Joe Buckman ripped out the rotting front door and single-light windows that were not original to the house. Restoring what was lost, he dramatically improved the appearance of the house. "It had the character. It just needed to be spruced up," says Buckman.

Project Particulars >

Entry Replacing the decrepit door with a salvaged period piece and fitting a new transom in the original framing discovered above it helps restore the home's historic details and accentuate its columned portico.

Windows New divided-light sash brighten the openings, which had looked like black holes.

Shutters Hanging the gable window's original shutters (found in the attic) and four new copies downstairs emphasizes the house's symmetry.

Paint The buttery body color, white trim, and contrasting black door and shutters add new dimension to the facade.

Roof Faux slate shingles highlight the steeply pitched roof, which had looked gloomy sheathed in worn asphalt.

Value Added 33%

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WORKSHOP

TECHNIQUES, TIPS, AND YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

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Cutting Through Big Timbers
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Hand Pruners

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The offset, vertically aligned handles of these grass shears keep your wrist straight and your knuckles clear of the ground—a big improvement over the uncomfortable "in line" shears common before WWII. This design has removable blades for easy replacement or sharpening.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRIAN KLUTCH

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TOH 407

Ask This Old House

> NEED AN EXPERT? WE'VE GOT FIVE, READY TO ANSWER YOUR HOME QUESTIONS

PHOTOS (CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT) BRYAN WALKER; WEBB CHAPPELL; ©; KAY; ROBERT HANSEN

Patterns for Curved Brick Walks

We had a semicircular brick walk installed in a basket-weave pattern, but the joints are tighter in some places than in others, and the walk's surface is uneven. Should we be upset?

THE AGVENTS, HARTWELL, GA

Roger Cook replies: A good brick walkway should have uniform joints, but wherever it curves, those joints will open up somewhat. Basket-weave and herringbone patterns make this problem worse. The best pattern for curved brick paths is the running bond, which tends to disguise joint irregularities. Plus, you can cut the ends of some of the bricks at a slight angle to keep the joints more uniform.

As to the smoothness of your walk, part of the charm of brick is that it's not perfectly smooth. I'd say it's probably not worth getting upset about if you aren't tripping on it. But if you are, call the contractor back.

Roger Cook, *This Old House* landscape contractor, levels out a herringbone-patterned brick pathway

Painting Over Paneling

My living room walls are now covered with dark, grooved wood paneling. Is it possible to fill in the grooves so I can paint or wallpaper over it?

DOROTHY DISTER MORENCI, MICH

Tom Silva replies: Yes, it is possible, as long as the paneling isn't solid wood, which shrinks and swells too much for any filler to work. But if your paneling is made of plywood or some other product and it's securely fastened to the wall, treat it like drywall. Fill each groove with joint compound and cover each joint between the panels with compound and fiberglass tape. When the compound is dry, sand it and the rest of the wall, apply a coat of primer, and it'll be ready for paint or paper.

Replace a Leaky Shower Diverter

When I take a shower, I pull up on the little knob on the bathtub spout to make the water go to the showerhead. But nearly half the water still comes out the spout, and the shower spray is pretty weak. Can anything be done to stop the spout from leaking?

B H. BELL, MONROE, LA

Richard Trethewey replies: Sure, you just need a new spout and knob, called a diverter. Replacing a spout isn't difficult, and you don't even have to turn off the main water supply.

The first step is to figure out how the spout is attached. If you see a small hole or a set screw on the underside of the spout near where it meets the wall, cover the drain with a washcloth and use an Allen wrench—also called a

{ Q: WHAT IS IT? }

A Vacuum attachment
B Pump-jack crank
C Pilot-light restarter
D Or..

* For answer see page 107

ROGER COOK
LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR

TOM SILVA
GENERAL CONTRACTOR

RICHARD TRETHEWEY
PLUMBING & HEATING EXPERT

HORM ABRAM
MASTER CARPENTER

KEVIN O'CONNOR
HOST

A Sturdier Deck

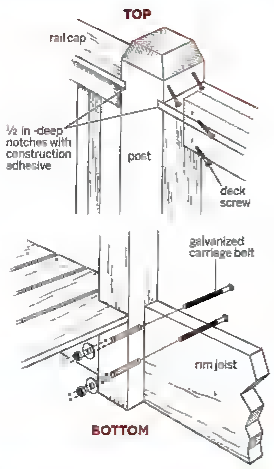


ILLUSTRATION: HARRY BATES

hex key—to remove the screw. The washcloth will catch the screw before it dives down the drain. Now twist the spout as you pull it straight out and off the copper supply pipe.

If there's no set screw, then the spout is threaded onto the supply pipe. Grab the spout with a pipe wrench and turn it counterclockwise until the spout comes off.

Now take the old spout to the hardware store or home center and get a new one that attaches the same way. Be extra careful choosing a threaded spout because some are threaded near the outlet, others, near the base. As long as the spout you buy has threads in the same place as the old one, you're good to go.

Deck-Railing Fix

There are big gaps between the posts and railings on my deck. Please help! By the way, before I was born, my older sisters, who'd been watching *This Old House* since they were babies, wanted to name me Norm Abram. Genet

EMILY GENET, O'FALLON, MO.

Norm Abram replies: I'm glad your parents went with Emily, that's a much nicer name for a girl.

To close up those gaps, you'll have to beef up the way the posts and rails are fastened. For the posts, insert galvanized carriage bolts all the way through the deck's rim joist. These bolts are much stronger than lag screws.

Now strengthen the connection between the top rail and the post. Take off the cap pieces and cut two ½-inch-deep horizontal notches in opposite sides of the post, as shown in the illustration. Cut new rail caps and bed their ends in the notches with construction adhesive. Finally, drive deck screws up through the bottom of the new caps and into the post. Screws hold much better than nails and will help your joints stay nice and tight.

TLC for Gutters

I have a gutter that spills over whenever it rains. What can I do to stop it?

NANCY CUBELLI, UNIONVILLE, CONN.

Tom Silva replies: Gutters overflow for three reasons: because they're clogged, sloped improperly, or sagging. Or it could be some combination of all three.

Clogged gutters and downspouts are the most common cause of spillovers, so start by scooping out any debris and flushing out the downspouts with a hose. If a downspout won't clear, ream it out with a coat hanger, wire or remove the elbow to dislodge debris.

Next, check the gutter's slope by pouring water into it. If the water doesn't flow smoothly toward the downspout, the gutter will have to be removed and rehung so it slopes at least ¼ inch for every foot of length.

Now if the water accumulates in one spot, it means the gutter is sagging, and its supports will need to be adjusted or beefed up. For gutters that are nailed onto the fascia, replace the nails in the vicinity of the sag with gutter screws, which won't pull out. For gutters that are held in place by straps or brackets, bend or reposition these supports until the sag is gone. You can see if the sag is gone by climbing a ladder and sighting down the gutter's length. Or you can pour more water in the gutter and watch what happens.

PHOTO: ROBERT HARRON

Uncool Cats

Cats use the tilled soil in our flower beds as their litter box, which makes gardening rather unpleasant to say the least. Commercial cat repellents are costly and have to be reapplied after each watering. What else we can do?

G. E. MORRIS, IDAHO FALLS, IDAHO

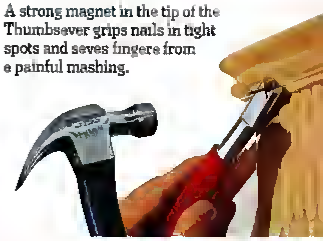
Roger Cook replies. How about adopting a dog? Okay, if that doesn't appeal to you, try this. Temporarily cover any loose soil with landscape fabric or hardware cloth. If the cats can't dig a little before doing their business, they just might stay away.

But the easiest thing to do is install a motion-activated water sprinkler, such as the Scare-Crow, which sprays any animal that comes near. I've used them successfully to scare away deer and it should work great on cats. Just remember to shut it off before you start gardening, or you could get soaked. ■

{ A: WHAT IS IT? }

D. Nail holder

A strong magnet in the tip of the Thumbsaver grips nails in tight spots and saves fingers from a painful mashing.



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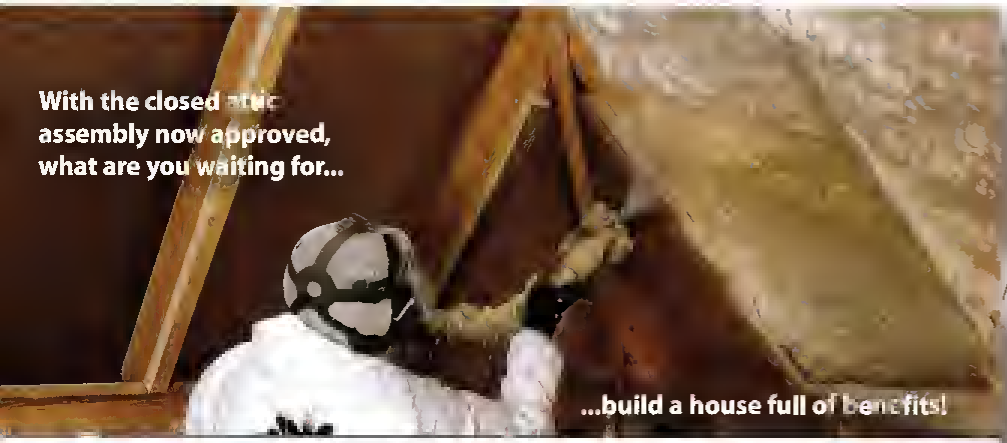
Include a complete address and daytime phone number. Published questions will be edited for clarity and length and may be used in other media. We regret that, due to the volume of mail received, we're not able to reply to unpublished questions.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY, PAGE 112



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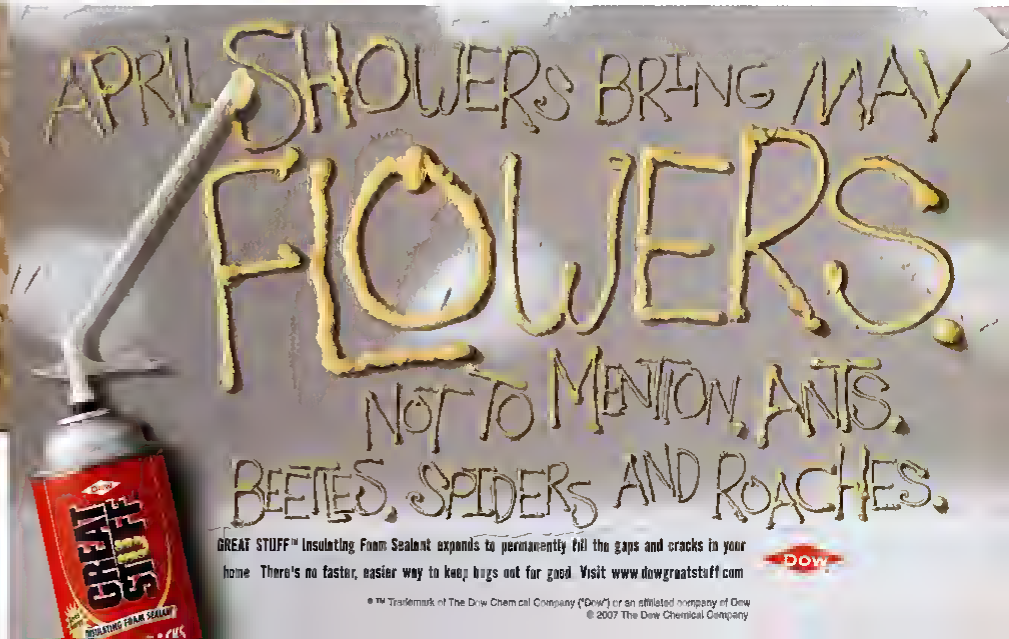
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Skill Building

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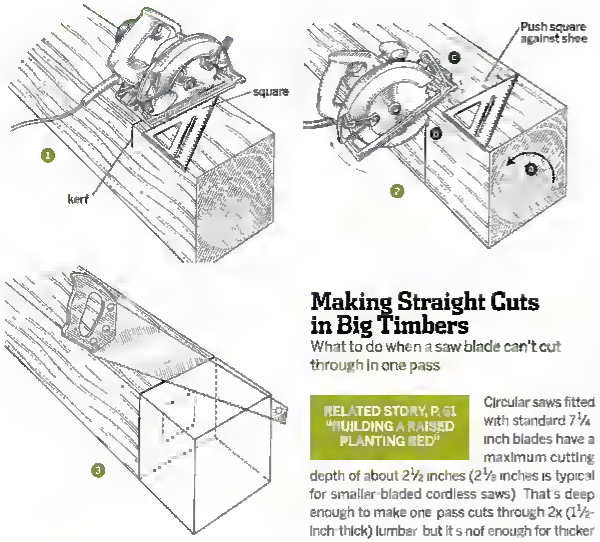

Making Straight Cuts in Big Timbers

What to do when a saw blade can't cut through in one pass

RELATED STORY, P. 61 "BUILDING A RAISED PLANTING BED"

Circular saws fitted with standard 7¼ inch blades have a maximum cutting depth of about 2½ inches (2⅛ inches is typical for smaller-bladed cordless saws). That's deep enough to make one-pass cuts through 2x (1½-inch-thick) lumber, but it's not enough for thicker stock, like 4x4 posts and 6x6 landscape timbers. Cutting these hunks of wood requires a few more passes and the help of a speed square.

1. Mark the cutline on one face of the post, using the square to guide the pencil. Place the saw's shoe flat on this face, and line up the blade with the cut line. Hook the square on the corner of the post and slide it against the shoe, as shown. Hold the square tight, pull the saw away from the wood slightly, then pull the trigger. Make the cut using the edge of the square to guide the saw in a straight cut.

2. Rotate the post toward you (a). Now use the kerf to align the square. Place the stopped blade in the kerf (b), and put the square against the saw's shoe (c). Hold the square tight, pull the blade out of the kerf, then pull the trigger and make the cut, using the edge of the square to guide the saw. Rotate the post toward you again, and repeat this step to finish cutting through a 4x4.

3. For larger timbers, rotate the timber toward you again, set the blade in the kerf, and make a fourth cut as before. Then take a handsaw (or a reciprocating saw with a long blade) and cut through the untouched wood at the center of the timber. The kerfs will help guide the blade as you saw.

—THOMAS BAKER

Installing & Painting Wood Beadboard

Take these steps to minimize unsightly cracks

RELATED STORY, P. 25 BATH DESIGN

If you're a traditionalist who only wants to use beadboard made from strips milled out of wood, keep these precautions in mind.

›› **Do the work in spring or fall, if possible.** Wood trim is best installed before moist summer air makes it swell or dry winter air causes it to shrink.

›› **Acclimate the wood indoors.** Ideally, its moisture content should be 8 percent when measured with a moisture meter.

›› **Prime all sides.** Seal every face, edge, and end of every piece with an oil-based primer to protect the wood from water and reduce seasonal swelling and shrinking.

›› **Paint the tongues.** Before installing the tongue-and-groove boards, paint the tongues the same color that you will be painting the finished wainscot. That way no other color will show through when the boards shrink in the winter.

›› **Brush alongside joints, not across them.** Any paint film that bridges the joints will crack as the wood moves. —T.B.

{ TOH TIP }

Along the edges where the beadboard is covered by trim, fill any gaps with caulk so dust and dirt won't collect. Before the caulk dries, tool it smooth with a ¾-inch putty knife. Work it around each board's profile with the blade end held horizontally.

ILLUSTRATION: HARRY BLISS; PHOTO: CHARLES MAZZACANO

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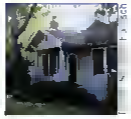

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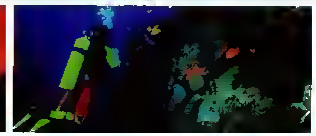

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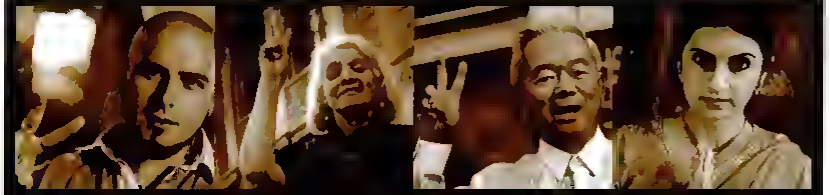

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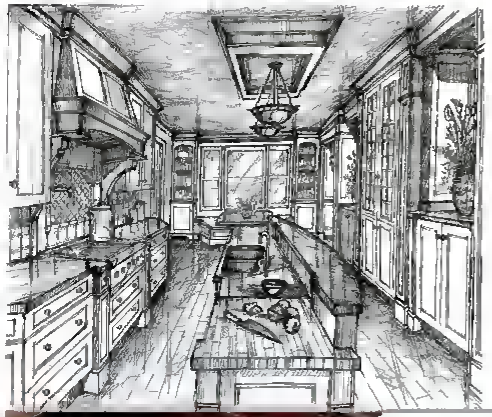

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Norm's Notebook

> MASTER CARPENTER NORM ABRAM'S TECHNIQUES FOR PRUNERS, FEATURED IN TOOLBOX, P 45

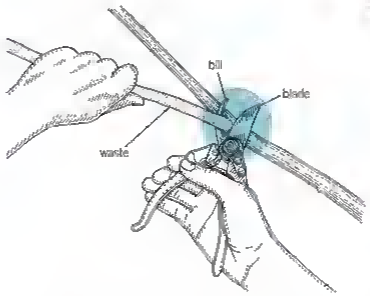
>HAND PRUNERS

Because my idea of pruning is to fire up a chain saw, I asked *This Old House* landscape contractor Roger Cook for a lesson in the more precise technique of pruning by hand. Here are a few of his recommendations

Small, live branches call for a bypass pruner, as Roger demonstrates for Norm on a dormant shrub. For dead wood, Roger pulls out an anvil pruner.

Keep It Sharp

Dull pruners make you work harder and leave rough, hard-to-heal wounds. So before you begin a major pruning session, tune up the tool's blade. See how Roger sharpens pruners at thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts

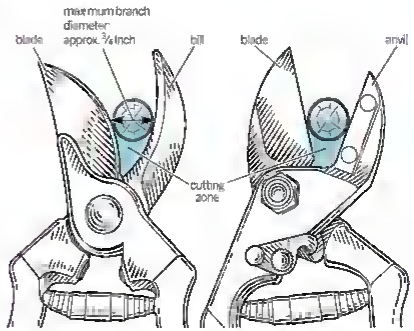


Making the Cut

To make clean cuts with a bypass pruner, place the blade—not the bill—closest to the branch that's being saved. That keeps the cut next to the collar, the swollen ring around the base of a shoot, so the cut will heal quickly and inconspicuously. Keep your wrist straight, so you don't strain or injure the ligaments in your wrist and forearm, and your other hand on the waste piece, ready to pull it out and throw it into a nearby bucket. By cleaning up clippings as you go, you won't find dead, brown branches hung up in the plant later.

Don't Bite Off Too Much

You want to get the branch as deep in a pruner's jaws as you can without forcing the handles to open beyond the grasp of your fingers. If a branch will only fit between the tips of the blade and bill or anvil, it's too big. That's when it's time for loppers or a folding saw.



bypass pruner — anvil pruner

5 TIP

The perfect time to prune a plant is the week after the last flowers fall off. It's better for the plants and easier than trying to prune everything in the garden all at once

Dull pruners? go to thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts

PHOTO: CARL TREMBLAY. ILLUSTRATIONS: HARRY BATES

Directory

SOURCES, PRICES, AND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PRODUCTS FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

AROUND THE HOUSE (pp. 15–20)

"Green Roofing Just Got Easier" Green Grid Weston Solutions Vernon Hills, IL 847-918-4149 greengridroofs.com. **"Destinations".** *Thanks to—* Lambertville Chamber of Commerce Lambertville, NJ, 609-397-0055 lambertville.org Lambertville Free Public Library Lambertville, NJ 609-397-0275 njstatelib.org **"Origins".** Mallet-Driven Nailer Powernail Co. Chicago, IL 800-323-1653 powernail.com **"Not Just for Bungalows".** KDI25 kitchen sink Copper Sinks Direct, LLC Dallas, TX 866-789-7465 coppersinksdirect.com *The Arts and Crafts Movement* by Rosalind P. Blakesley Phaidon Press London, England phaidon.com *The New Bungalow Kitchen* by Peter LaBau Taunton Press Newtown, CT 800-477-8727 taunton.com Classic Lantern solar light Brinkmann Dallas, TX 800-468-5252 brinkmann.net. Arts & Crafts backplate (1527NB), 3-inch pull (1523NB), and square knob (1522NB) Woodcraft Supply, LLC Parkersburg, WV 800-535-4482 woodcraft.com TL309 Copper tile, Copperhead Sinks Dallas, TX 866-798-7465 copperheadsinks.com Pinecones tile Winged Dog Tile Sacramento, CA 800-964-3363 wingeddogtile.com Pine Landscape (#4425) and Dard Hunter Rose Tile (#3314) Mission Tile West, South Pasadena, CA 626-799-4595 missiontilewest.com

BATH DESIGN (pp. 25–27)

Designers. Rick and Elizabeth O'Leary Two Tall Trees Design Croton Falls, NY 914-669-0014. **Tile.** United States Ceramic Tile Company North Canton, OH 800-321-0684 usctco.com **Bathtub.** Sunrise Specialty Company Oakland, CA 510-729-7277 sunrisespecialty.com **Sinks and toilets.** Toto USA Inc. Morrow, GA 888-295-8134 totousa.com **Bath fittings and towel bars.** Newport Brass a div. of Brasstech Inc. a Masco Co. Santa Ana, CA 949-417-5207 newportbrass.com **Paint.** North Hampton Beige Benjamin Moore & Company Montvale, NJ 888-236-6667 benjaminmoore.com **Windows.** Andersen Corporation Bayport, MN 888-888-7020 andersenwindows.com **Shower door and radiator covers.** Custom. **Medicine cabinets.** Pottery Barn 888-779-5176 potterybarn.com **Towels, soap dish, loofah, soaps, toothbrush holder.** Bed Bath and Beyond 800-462-3966 bedbathandbeyond.com

LUXURIES

Leave the Light On (pp. 29–32)

Shown in Table of Contents. Oluce Stone Y Lighting LLC, Palo Alto, CA 866-428-9289 ylighting.com. **Flight of Fancy.** 1556SZ Hinkley Lighting Cleveland, OH 800-446-5539 hinkleylighting.com **Glow Post.** 15392 Kichler Lighting Cleveland, OH 866-558-5706 kichlerlighting.com **Rock Solid.** Natural Dome Light, Stone Forest, Santa Fe, NM 888-682-2987 stoneforest.com **Broad Beam.** Micheleliter Nightscaping, Redlands, CA 800-544-4840, nightscaping.com **Solar Flair.** Brushed Copper Solar Light Brinkmann, Dallas, TX 800-468-5252 brinkmann.net **Moving Targets.** 1522CO (square) and 1531CO (round) Hinkley Lighting Cleveland, OH 800-446-5539 hinkleylighting.com **Golden Globes.** Phobus Sphere and Sun Egg Lasergente Glass Studio Media, PA 866-317-6727 nightorbs.com **Stem Gems.** Genesis Firefly Solar Garden Art Red Globe and Firefly Solar Garden Art Calla Lilly Allsop Bellingham, WA 800-426-4303 allsopgarden.com.

SALVAGE

New Turns for Old Newels (pp. 36–37)

Featured dealer. Zaborski Emporium Kingston, NY 845-338-6465 stanthejunkman.com *Thanks to—* Mark Foster at Second Chance Inc. Baltimore, MD 410-385-1101, secondchanceinc.org

LANDSCAPING

Bye-bye, Bambi (pp. 49–52)

Repellents. Deer-Off Havahart Lititz, PA 800-800-1619 havahart.com Plantskydd Repellent Tree World Plant Care Products Inc. St. Joseph, MO 604-885-3535 plantskydd.com ScareCrow Contech Inc., Victoria, BC 800-767-8658 contech-inc.com Fels-Naptha soap Dial Corporation Scottsdale, AZ 800-258-3425 dialcorp.com *Thanks to—* Dave Jensen, Deer-Resistant Landscape Nursery, Clare, MI 800-595-3650 deerresistantplants.com Michael Conover Berryman Institute, Utah State University, Logan, UT Barbara Fornal Gifts From Nature, Accord, NY 845-626-4621.

UPKEEP

Spruce Up Your Deck (pp. 55–57)

Deck refinishing. Bonesteel Home Inspection Service Inc. Ulster Park, NY 845-339-2305 **Stain.** Alkyd Transparent Stain Benjamin Moore & Co. Montvale, NJ 201-573-9600 benjaminmoore.com **Stain brush.** 5-inch Olympian Arrow Rollers/Worthy Brush Inc., Wyandanch, NY 631-643-0436 arrowrthy.com **Acid brush.** Quickie Manufacturing Corporation, Cinnaminson, NJ 800-257-5751 quickie.com *Thanks to—* Forest Products Laboratory Madison, WI 608-231-9200 fpl.fs.fed.us

HOW IT WORKS

Rain Drain (p. 59)

Barrel drywells. NDS Inc. Lindsay, CA 559-562-9888 ndspro.com **Half-pipe drywells.** CulTec Inc. Brookfield, CT 203-775-4416 cultec.com

HOMEOWNER'S HANDBOOK

Building a Raised Planting Bed (pp. 61–66)

Cedar lumber. Dykes Lumber Weehawken, NJ 201-867-0391 dykeslumber.com **Trellises and cloches.** English Creek Gardens Amelia, OH 800-610-6610 englishcreekgardens.com **Tomato cages and mulch.** Gardener's Supply Company Burlington, VT 800-427-3363 gardeners.com English Creek Gardens Amelia, OH 800-610-8610 englishcreekgardens.com **Touch 'N Flow RainWand.** Dramm Corporation Manitowoc, WI 920-684-0227 *Thanks to—* Maureen O'Brien Modino Design Brooklyn, NY 718-768-0001 modino.com

SMALL YARD, BIG IMPACT

(pp. 68–75)

Landscape architect. Christopher J. Cohan ASLA Rye, NY 914-967-4485 chriscohan.com **Fence-gate, and lamppost.** Walpole Woodworkers Walpole, MA 800-343-6948 wapolewoodworkers.com **Fence and shutter stain.** Kennebunkport Green Benjamin Moore & Company Montvale, NJ 888-236-6667 benjaminmoore.com **Fence post light.** Old California Lantern Company Orange, CA 800-577-6679 OldCalifornia.com **Gate hardware.** Snug Cottage Imports Inc. Port Huron, MI 800-637-5427 snugcottagehardware.com **Pillar planter precast concrete blocks.** Versa-Lok Retaining Wall Systems Oakdale, MN 800-770-4525 versa-lok.com **House and garage outdoor lights.** Arroyo Craftsman Baldwin Park, CA 626-960-9411 arroyo-craftsman.com **Shutters and shutter hardware.** Shuttercraft Madison, CT 203-245-2608 shuttercraft.com **Patio furniture.** Kingsley-Bate LTD Manassas, VA, 703-361-7000 kingsleybate.com *Thanks to—* Bob Booth and Sam DeForest with Walpole Woodworkers, Karl Bremmer at Versa-Lok.

DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

(pp. 76–83)

Roofing contractor. Rob Miller, RJ Miller Roofing Inc. Oaklyn, NJ 856-261-2776 **Roof simulated slate tile.** Grand Manor CertainTeed Valley Forge, PA 800-782-8777 certainteed.com. **Porch builders.** Seth Rosen and Chris Bovino, Three Brothers Builders Cherry Hill, NJ 609-828-3311 threebrothersbuildersllc.com. **Baluster railing and brackets.** Rick Tamburo, Victoriana East Merchantville, NJ 856-910-1887 victoriaeast.com **Salvaged candelabrum, Hudson River boat chairs, and schoolhouse lights.** Dennis Emerson, Emerson Antique Barn New Paltz, NY 845-255-0793 emersonantiquebarn.com **Kitchen range.** Viking Range Corporation Greenwood, MS 662-455-1200, vikingrange.com **Kitchen counters.** Butcher block hardwood, IKEA Plymouth Meeting, PA 800-434-4532, ikea.com **Dishwasher.** Series KitchenAid, St. Joseph, MI 800-422-1230 kitchenaid.com **Kitchen sink faucets.** Amaryllis, American Standard Piscataway, NJ 800-442-1902 americanstandard-us.com **Kitchen cabinetry.** KraftMaid Middlefield, OH; 888-562-7744 kraftmaid.com

HANDS ON HARDWARE

(pp. 84–89)

Thanks to— Dennis Stauffer, Baldwin Hardware Corp. Reading, PA 800-437-7448 baldwinhardware.com

FROM THE TOH TV PROJECT

Back to Nature (pp. 90–95)

Architect. David Webber Webber/Hanzlik Architects Austin, TX 512-236-1032 webberhanzlik.com **Builder.** Bill Moore, Wm T. Moore Construction Inc. Austin, TX 512-445-2772 **Landscape designer.** J. Adams Kirkpatrick Sunflower Design Austin, TX 512-350-0083 sunflowerdesign.net. **Landscape contractor.** Russell Womack, The Natural Gardener Capital Landscaping Austin, TX 512-383-0301 **Rainwater collection.** Innovator Water Solutions Austin, TX 512-490-0932 watercache.com **Irrigation.** Lupton Irrigation Co. Austin, TX 512-310-1914 luptonirrigation.com **Plants.** Far South Nursery Austin, TX, 512-291-4648. *Thanks to—* Brooklyn Botanic Garden Brooklyn, NY 718-623-7200 bbg.org Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Austin, TX 512-292-4100 wildflower.org K & R Tree and Landscape Burlington, MA 781-272-6104

CURB APPEAL

(pp. 96–101)

Architect. David B. Raino Ogden Raino Ogden Architects Chicago, IL 773-528-6510 **Landscape design.** Phil Robin's Landscapes Clarendon Hills, IL 630-325-7000 **Interior designer/colorist.** James G. Ferran ASID, CID Staten Island, NY 718-447-7055. designingman.com **Garage doors.** Clopay Building Products Mason, OH 800-225-6729 clopaydoor.com **Landscape architect.** Peter Stinchcomb-Exterra Designs Inc. Glenview, IL, 847-729-1830 exterradesigns.com **Landscape designer.** Patricia Wagner Garden Design San Leandro, CA 510-638-6681 gardensbypat.com **Designer/contractor.** Joe Buckman, JTD Holdings Bardstown, KY 502-249-1099 *Thanks to—* Christina Berger, Brush Hill Realtors Hinsdale, IL 630-975-0088 brushhill.com Beverly Servidio, All Shore Realty Staten Island, NY 718-494-8700 allshorerealty.com Debra Kameros, Debra Kameros Company, New York, NY 212-242-6800 debrakameros.com Cindy Brouillette, Cindy B! Realtors, Fort Wright, KY 800-305-2606 cindyb.com. Steve Hudson, The Hudson Company, Winnetka, IL 847-446-9600, thehudsoncompany.com David Hertz, Prudential California Realty, Walnut Creek, CA 952-932-1000 prurealty.com Betty Seay, Betty Seay Realty, Bardstown, KY 502-349-0051, bettyseay.com.

WORKSHOP

Ask This Old House (pp. 105–107)

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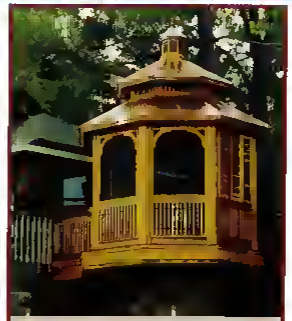

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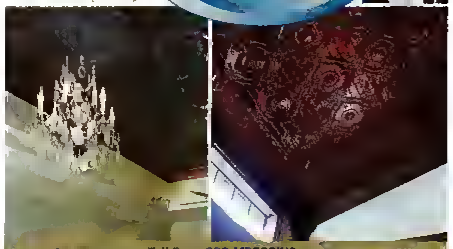

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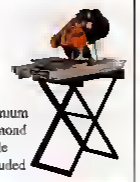

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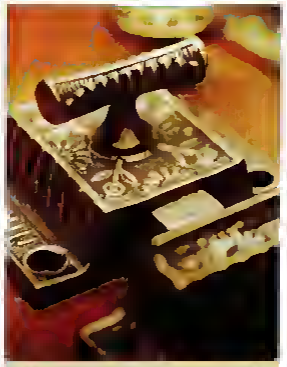

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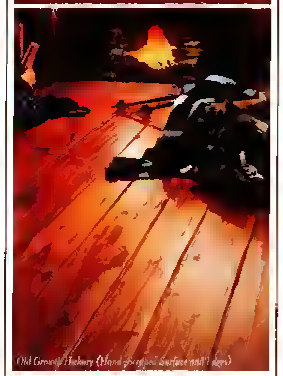

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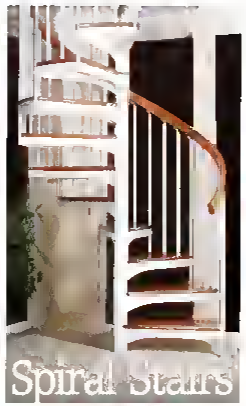

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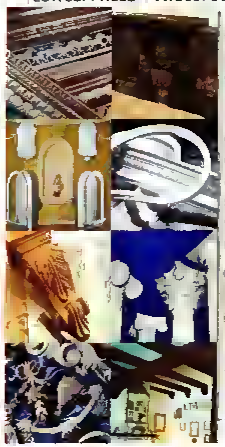

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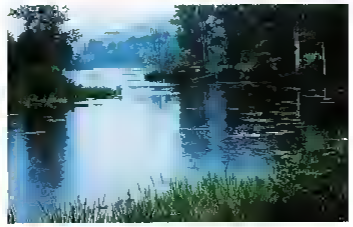
SITTING ON THE FRONT PORCH of this 1870 farmhouse, Roberta Hagerman would listen to Merle Sprague, the home's owner, recount boyhood tales of riding a horse-drawn bobsled through miles of waist-deep snow on his way to school. And unlike most of the hyperbolic stories of our aged, exaggeration-prone kinfolk, this one was true. After all, we're talking Northern Maine in the 1920s, where people did those sorts of things.

And besides, Roberta knew Merle well enough to trust him. In fact, all the locals knew Merle. Their town of Spragueville, a small potato-farming community within the city of Presque Isle (pop. 9,511), had been named for his family. In the 1930s, the Spragues donated much of the land surrounding the house to create Aroostook State Park, now a popular spot for skiing, skating, and tobogganing. The Spragues had also operated a well-known lumber mill right behind their home, where many of the studs, joists, floors, and cabinets for the town's houses—including the Spragues' own—were sawn and sanded.

When Merle moved out of the house about 15 years ago, Roberta and her husband, Edward, snatched it up. Though they still use it for the occasional vacation, it needs a lot of work—more than the 70-something couple can handle. So they're looking for a buyer who will do what it requires to bring the six-bedroom into this century, while keeping in mind its historic character. That shouldn't be difficult, since almost all of its original details, including the floors, molding, wainscoting, built-ins, windows, doors, banisters—even the three-seater outhouse—are still intact. It will need a septic system and a new well, however.

But once the work is complete, the new owner can sit on a just-painted front porch, breathe in some of that fresh Maine air, and start spinning his or her own harrowing tales of bringing this tough-as-nails treasure back to life.

—KEITH PANDOLFI



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The house's stone foundation, rafters, and floor joists are all solid; the porch has been enclosed. Behind the house is Echo Lake, where the Spragues' lumber mill once stood. A built-in kitchen pantry with thick pine door casing. The house retains original wainscoting, molding, and wallpaper. A trapped-in-time kitchen still has old-school linoleum floors and vintage appliances.

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PHOTOS: KENNETH BLUM

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